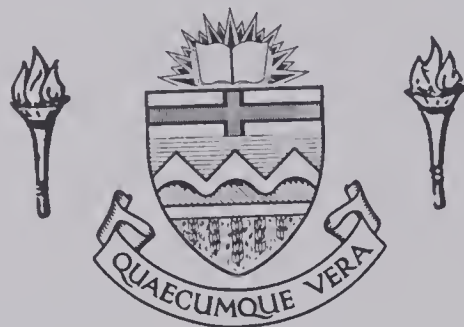


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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHESTERFIELD HOUSE  
AND THE  
BOW RIVER EXPEDITION

by



David J. Fairfield

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "CHESTERFIELD HOUSE AND THE BOW RIVER EXPEDITION" submitted by David James Fairfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

APPENDIX TO THE REPORT

OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN REGARD TO THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE  
CROWN IN THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK  
AND TO THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE  
CROWN IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

## ABSTRACT

Throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Hudson's Bay Company largely ignored the vast area drained by the South Saskatchewan river system. The subject of this thesis is the one large and well-equipped expedition sent to the region. The Bow River Expedition of 1822 was an attempt by the newly reorganized Hudson's Bay Company to reach into the South Saskatchewan and Missouri river basins for furs. The scheme was considered necessary for a number of reasons, most important of these being the necessity of finding a replacement for the rapidly deteriorating North Saskatchewan district; but a need to arrange employment for men displaced by the merger of 1821; and a desire to reach into the fabled riches of the Missouri were also significant.

Although the expedition records and those of the men who planned it leave many questions unanswered, much is known. The Bow River Expedition accounts lie in the Hudson's Bay Archives, as does the journal and a considerable amount of correspondence between the various officers who were involved. These records along with other published accounts allow a reasonably complete picture of the expedition to be assembled.

The story of the Bow River Expedition is sufficient in itself as a subject for investigation, but any previous treatment has always dealt with the venture as a unique



development in spite of a considerable body of evidence which suggests otherwise. It is perhaps better viewed as the culmination of the thinking that had in 1800 led to Peter Fidler's establishment of Chesterfield House. Not only did the expedition build very near, if not virtually on Fidler's site only two decades later; but it appears that some of the same men (notably James Bird) were involved in the initiation of both endeavors. Such a connection would indicate that the Bow River Expedition was not as much a dangerous mission into hostile territory as a continuation of an established and tested trading pattern.

The scope of this study, because of the intention to show a relationship between various endeavors of the plains, must be wide enough to include Chesterfield House and the Bow River Expedition. A chronological pattern was chosen so that a continuity between the events might be emphasized. It begins with a chapter on Chesterfield House, Fidler's 1800 - 1802 post, followed by a short look at what little is known of New Chesterfield House, an occupation of the area several years after Fidler's. The final three chapters deal with the Bow River Expedition in three sections: The Scheme, Implementation, and A Winter on the Plains. The conclusion looks at the journal and account book to see if the Bow River Expedition was indeed a failure.



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## INTRODUCTION

Just east of the dusty Alberta prairie town of Empress lies the junction of the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers. Here the meandering Red Deer meets the fast running, deeply entrenched South Saskatchewan for the rush north east to the North Saskatchewan river. At this watery intersection the bare grass of the banks and the brush and scrawny poplar of the valley appear not unlike countless miles of prairie river bottom. Nothing remains to show that this was once the scene of bustling activity when the first fur trade posts in the region later to be known as the "Palliser Triangle" were located nearby. To this lonely spot, hundreds of miles from the nearest trading posts, came traders who risked their lives among the hostile prairie tribes in an attempt to tap the fabled riches of the area for the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company, and the XY Company. No mere shoestring operations, these were major expeditions, well planned, extensively equipped, and adequately manned. Had they been successful, the entire trading pattern of the Northwest would have been drastically altered, and with it the entire history of the Canadian west.

Although a good deal of published material exists about the initial occupation of the site, that of Peter



Fidler, and his competitors from the North West and XY companies, there is almost nothing in print about subsequent expeditions. The exciting story of Fidler and his Chesterfield House told in J. G. MacGregor's Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Surveyor, and in the even more recent "Chesterfield House Journals" in Vol. XXVI of the Hudson's Bay Record Society series has been often unjustly overlooked by historians, but is only a part of the whole tale. The Bow River Expedition, planned and carried out after the amalgamation of the rival fur companies in 1821, was the logical, if unsuccessful, consequence of Fidler's earlier endeavors. With few exceptions, such as A. S. Morton's A History of the Canadian West to 1870 - 1871, and E. E. Rich's The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670 - 1870, no sources deal with the whole story of the attempt to carry the fur trade up the South Saskatchewan, and even these make no attempt to relate the separate trading ventures.

The purpose of this study is two fold. Primarily, it is intended to relate the story, as far as can be uncovered, of the South Saskatchewan trading expeditions: those of Peter Fidler, John MacDonald of Garth, and Donald McKenzie. A secondary purpose involves a look at the relationship between the various expeditions in an attempt to determine if one led to another or if each was a separate, unrelated, incident. As much work has already been done on Fidler's Chesterfield House, covered in books by J. G. MacGregor and the Hudson's Bay Record Society, the major emphasis of this



study is concentrated on the Bow River Expedition, the records and journals of which remain unpublished. These were used in their manuscript form through the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company.



## CHAPTER I

### Chesterfield House

When Peter Fidler and his party of eighteen men<sup>1</sup> began their journey up the South Saskatchewan in the Fall of 1800, they were not entering entirely unknown country. First seen by Henday in 1754,<sup>2</sup> the South Branch of the Saskatchewan had been the scene of considerable activity in the fifteen years prior to Fidler's arrival on its waters. In 1785 Peter Pangman established Fort des Isles about forty miles upstream from the river's junction with the North Saskatchewan, and later in that year Holmes built a rival North West Company post nearby.<sup>3</sup>

The two Canadian posts were outflanked the following year by Michael Oman's South Branch House built further upstream, and both moved near Oman's post soon after.<sup>4</sup> At

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<sup>1</sup>"Chesterfield House Journals, 1800 - 1802," in A. M. Johnson, ed., Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, 1795 - 1802. The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. 26 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>A. S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870 - 1871 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1937), p. 246.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>4</sup>E. E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670 - 1870, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. 22 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), p. 143. Rich says that Oman arrived in 1786, while Morton, in error, says Spring, 1785 (Morton, History, p. 338) which would have been before Holmes and Pangman and would have made their shift in location unnecessary.



Oman's Hudson's Bay Company post David Thompson spent his first winter inland, during the 1785 season.<sup>5</sup> Gros Ventre Indians attacked and burned the Hudson's Bay post in the summer of 1794, killing three of the four servants attached to the post as well as a number of Indian women and children. After this attack, and a futile attempt against the better fortified North West Company post nearby, both were hastily abandoned, with the Hudson's Bay Company establishing Carlton in 1796, while the Canadians<sup>6</sup> built Fort St. Louis (Fort la Corne) in 1795, both on the safer North Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup>

Exactly why Fidler and his opponents returned up the South Saskatchewan is difficult to determine with any real certainty. Though Fidler's own journal gives no reason for the mission, his biographer, J. G. MacGregor, surmises that the new post was built primarily for a provisions trade so strained by the pressure of competition that the North Saskatchewan posts were unable to procure a sufficient supply of meat for the inland operations of the various concerns.<sup>8</sup> J. E. A. Macleod saw the burst of activity on the river at the turn of the century as an endeavor ". . . in whole or in part, to meet the American opposition." he concluded that when

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<sup>5</sup>Morton, History, p. 444.

<sup>6</sup>Pangman's company, Gregory and McLeod, united with the North West Company in 1787. (Ibid., p. 342.)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 457 - 458.

<sup>8</sup>J. G. MacGregor, Peter Fidler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 124.



this threat failed to materialize, perhaps owing to the hostility of the Blackfeet to the Americans, the operation could be abandoned.<sup>9</sup> A. S. Morton, on the other hand, attributed the move to an attempt to ". . . draw the Blackfeet and piegans away southward, and the Indians of the Missouri northward."<sup>10</sup> Another reason for the Hudson's Bay move down the South Saskatchewan is suggested by the recent Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, 1795 - 1802. Miss A. M. Johnson, in her introduction, writes that the English company made the move to compete with the North West Company, whose men had let it be known that they planned establishing themselves on the prairie river. James Bird, in charge of the Saskatchewan district, visited Fidler at Lac la Biche in the winter of 1799 - 1800 to inform him, Miss Johnson assumes, of the development and to assign him the task of countering the Canadian move.<sup>11</sup> Bird's action upset William Tomison, then Governor at York Factory, who felt that the North West Company had acted only to lure the Hudson's Bay Company and the independent Canadian traders away from the rich Athabasca area.<sup>12</sup> Bird responded to

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<sup>9</sup>J. E. A. Macleod, "Piegan Post and the Blackfoot Trade," Canadian Historical Review, XXIV (1943), p. 274.

<sup>10</sup>Morton, History, p. 511.

<sup>11</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. lxxi.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. lxxvii.



this suggestion in a letter of February 19, 1801:

As to the south Branch I never considered it as a place that could come in competition with the Northward in any respect but having declined sending to the later place I thought it necessary to send to the former to secure our part of the slave Indian trade (and even with hopes of improving it) since the Canadians had determined on going there; not merely I presume in hopes of diverting our attention from the Northward No; I am confident they do not entertain so mean an opinion of our understandings as to flatter themselves that they should succeed by such a simple proceeding . . . . The NWt. Co. seem in reality to have had another and more extensive views in settling the South Branch no less by degrees to open a communication with the natives inhabiting the Wt. side of the mountain and even cross that formidable barrier itself with goods, which is found to be impossible from this river.<sup>13</sup>

Even this interesting material leaves the real intentions of the North Westers obscured. Whether they planned to use the South Saskatchewan as a route to the rich Kootenay Indian country, or hoped merely to lure their competitors from the Athabasca may never be known, as no North West Company documents appear to exist for the area during this period.

As Peter Fidler's journals for the two winters spent at Chesterfield House are largely summarized in J. G. MacGregor's volume on the surveyor and trader, and are printed in the Hudson's Bay Record Society series as volume 26, only the more important aspects of the endeavor need appear here. Leaving Carleton on August 15, Fidler's

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. lxxx1.



small party proceeded against the current until September 24, when the junction of the Red Deer and Bow Rivers, the site of Chesterfield House, was reached.<sup>14</sup> The journey was not without incident. Well aware of the danger posed by the plains tribes, Fidler had taken several precautions. His men were armed from their first day on the river, and a constant uneasiness induced the group to proceed very slowly, so that the North West Company brigade behind them would be able to overtake and accompany them to their mutual advantage. On September 9, after delaying for thirteen days waiting for the Canadians, Fidler left a note for its master and began a strenuous push up the river.<sup>15</sup>

Arriving at the junction of the rivers on September 24, the party camped on the south bank opposite the mouth of the Red Deer, where the surveyor estimated the width of the valley to be six hundred yards.<sup>16</sup> The following day the men

Crossed the river to the north side and looked out for a place to build at. The woods here are few and bad for building with.<sup>17</sup>

A better site was picked for the post the next day:

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<sup>14</sup>Fidler referred to the Bow River as the "Bad River" and included with it not only today's Bow, but the portion of the South Saskatchewan upstream from that river's junction with the Red Deer River. The South Branch began at the junction of the Red Deer and Bow, the site of Fidler's new post. (Ibid., p. 253.)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



The best place near here is at the junction of the Bad and Red Deers River for building, on the north side.<sup>18</sup>

At some time Fidler named the new post Chesterfield House, either as a tribute to a Committee member, Richard Hulse, whose home was Chesterfield House at Blackheath in Kent, or in memory of the market town of Chesterfield in his native Derbyshire.<sup>19</sup>

The men set to work immediately. Axes were helved on the day of arrival, and on September 25 the job of felling logs began. A saw pit was set up, and the foundations of a victual shed and trading room, thirteen feet by thirty feet, was marked out. By September 27 posts were being erected for this building.<sup>20</sup>

Opposition was not long in arriving. A party of traders attached to the new XY concern, not expected by Fidler, arrived on September 28. This group, led by John Wills and equipped with all the goods which could be carried in two well laden canoes, had, by October 1, established itself about a hundred yards to the west of Fidler's post.<sup>21</sup> The opposition which the Hudson's Bay party had anticipated, and even waited for, was longer in arriving. But on October 6 the three North West Company canoes appeared, led by Pierre Belleau.<sup>22</sup> On their arrival, they entered into a business partnership of an unusual sort with the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.lxxxv.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. pp. 268 - 269.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 270.



Hudson's Bay men. MacGregor says only that the North Westers planned to build close to the English post, an understatement,<sup>23</sup> when in fact the new arrivals built so close to Fidler's post that a common stockade could be erected to enclose both establishments, divided only by a log partition. The purpose of this arrangement was to increase the security of both parties, but inline with a Company policy of not aiding the XY Company, Fidler excluded them from the new quarters.<sup>24</sup>

Construction of the new posts continued unabated. On September 29 the men were engaged felling logs and stockades, while on October 1 they logged the cellar and set up the ridge pole of the trading room, which they began roofing the following day.<sup>25</sup> Having completed mudding the walls of

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<sup>23</sup>MacGregor, Fidler, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 270. The lack of hospitality shown to the XY Company was Hudson's Bay Company policy:

We understand that a New North West Company is established at Montreal to oppose us and the present Canadians.

We know by experience what our former opponents can or in short will do but as to the New Company they may under the notion of out Trading both ruin the Trade altogether. We therefore think it advisable for our Servants to incline towards our old Competitors rather than giving any Countenance to the New and thus by shewing a partiality and keeping up a good understanding with the Canadians, who are of course far more powerful than the New adventurers can be, it may eventually be the means of this New Company relinquishing their Enterprizes entirely.

(Hudson's Bay Archives., A.6/16, "London Correspondence Books Outwards," fo. 79. Letter of May 31, 1799 to Tomison, Ballendon and the Council at York.)

<sup>25</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 269.



the new trading room, on October 6 Fidler's men unloaded their goods from the boats and placed them in the new storage. Typical of the cooperation between the two older concerns was the offer made by Fidler to Beilleau for the use by the Canadians of the new storage shed for their goods, an offer they accepted.<sup>26</sup>

No sooner was the trading shed finished than a dwelling house, fifty one feet long by nineteen feet wide, was begun; and by October 11 had been logged to above the windows. More than a shack, the dwelling seems to have been a substantial structure. It was equipped with stone chimneys and stoves, which took considerable labor to construct, as well as interior partitions and a mudded roof. The building seems to have been completed by October 28, when the last touches of sealing mud were applied to the walls.<sup>27</sup>

Other building projects occupied the men once trading and dwelling facilities were complete. On October 20 they began a trench for stockades to measure seventy five by seventy eight feet.<sup>28</sup> The finished post was not only amazingly large for so small a party, but had taken relatively little time to construct. Although the shared stockade had been divided in mid November by a partition into a Hudson's Bay and North West Company area, the buildings inside the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 272.



Canadian portion of the post are not mentioned in Fidler's journal at all. Inside the English segment was the large dwelling house, to which a second floor was added early in December;<sup>29</sup> a cabin constructed for Fidler with a wooden floor, doors, and perhaps parchment windows;<sup>30</sup> cabins for the use of the men;<sup>31</sup> and the trading room.

The upstairs of one of these buildings was used to store returns.<sup>32</sup> This cannot have been the as yet uncompleted upper story on the dwelling house, nor that on the watchhouse, also incomplete; therefore we must assume that the trading and victual shed had two floors or that Fidler referred to the above ground portion of that building as its upper story, regarding the cellar as the first floor.

The defences of the post consisted of the stockade itself, completed on November 11,<sup>33</sup> a guard room and perhaps a separate watch house, although probably both were parts of the same bastion. As the size of this structure is not indicated in the journal, one can only assume that it was more than one story high, as on November 4 the journal discusses cutting wood for the lower guard room floor.<sup>34</sup> The watch house was constructed of palisades, or smaller logs set vertically, which had been positioned by November 15, the same day on which the outer gates of the post were hung.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 276 - 277.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 274.



Logs for the structure, perhaps for the horizontal bracing and upper floor and roof, were cut and "pulled up" during December. The watch house was completed on January 16.<sup>36</sup> Fidler's reference to "our guard room floor"<sup>37</sup> may mean that the Canadians constructed a similar structure on their side, agreeing with the more or less conventional practise of having two diagonally opposed bastions with which to watch all four walls, as was done in the post constructed by the Bow River Expedition in the same area.

The first season passed at Chesterfield House seems to have been both peaceful and relatively profitable. By the end of November the post had taken in nearly 4600 fox skins, along with those of a few wolves, badgers, and cats; although only ten and a half beaver had been traded. A ton of "bladder fat" and another of "back fat" were in storage at that time.<sup>38</sup> Trade continued good throughout the winter, so that Fidler could report that the value of his trade was 12,073 2/3 made beaver, or as he admitted, actually 408½ made beaver less than that total, which apparently did not give wolf skins their correct value of half that of beaver.<sup>39</sup>

While saying little about how he managed such a large trade against strong opposition with almost no trouble from the Indians, Fidler does make a few comments which may help

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 276 - 277.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 289. It should be noted that the returns from Chesterfield House were the largest sent to London from York Factory in 1801. (Ibid., p. lxxxvi.)



to illustrate the methods he used. On arriving at the post to trade, native customers were obliged to surrender their arms to the traders before business could proceed, and until they departed their weapons were kept under lock and key. Although alcohol does not figure significantly in the one fragmentary account which exists for the post for that year (only  $25\frac{1}{2}$  gallons of brandy are listed),<sup>40</sup> there is no reason to believe that Fidler's exceptional luck with the natives can be traced to a winter of prohibition. This feeling is at least partly supported by a comment in the journal on February 21: "Indians drinking all night, the first time since we arrived here."<sup>41</sup> Tobacco, the other important trading good, figured as prominently in Fidler's operations as in that of the later Bow River Expedition. The usual trading practise was for the Indians to send some of their more important men to the post for tobacco before coming in to trade. This gift of tobacco was reserved for those who had killed an enemy, Fidler relates, claiming that men without this status were ". . . looked upon by their Country men little better than old women."<sup>42</sup>

As customers, Fidler initially preferred the Fall or Gros Ventre Indians, both for the superior quality of their furs and their greater productivity, although relations were

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<sup>40</sup>Hudson's Bay Archives, B.34/a/1, "Chesterfield Journals," fo. 18. Hereafter cited H. B. A. etc.

<sup>41</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 289.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 280.



cordial enough with the Blackfeet. Fighting among the Indians seems to have been relatively unimportant during the first winter at the new post, although in December Snake Indian raiding parties stole 120 Piegan horses,<sup>43</sup> and late in February Fidler records the death of two Fall Indian hunters and the theft of a large number of furs which they had been carrying to his post.<sup>44</sup>

Little attempt at exploration was made by the parties at Chesterfield House, a policy which in view of the minimal size of the staffs at the three posts was certainly prudent. Several short trips were, however, made into the surrounding country which would have increased to some extent the trader's knowledge of the area. On October 19, a North Wester, accompanied by two Iroquois hunters and Blackfoot guides set off for the North Saskatchewan.<sup>45</sup> Fidler's men did not attempt a similar journey until December, but on the second of that month a shortage of trading goods, especially cloth and kettles, forced the trader to send four men to Edmonton with a Blackfoot chief as guide.<sup>46</sup> Four Canadians left for the North Saskatchewan a week later.<sup>47</sup> After seventeen days travelling from Edmonton, the English party arrived back at their post on January 7, having spent the last ten days of their trek entirely without food, warmed only by the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 279.



smokey weak heat of buffalo dung in the depth of a prairie winter.<sup>48</sup> Three of the four Canadians reappeared on January 15.<sup>49</sup>

Shortages of goods obliged the two Canadian companies to send men to the North Saskatchewan late in the winter. On January 21 four North Westers left for Carlton, while three days later a pair of XY men set out for their company's Buckingham House on a similar errand.<sup>50</sup> The new company's men returned on February 25,<sup>51</sup> followed on March 16 by the other Canadians returning from Carlton.<sup>52</sup> Two far more interesting journeys took place in February and March. On February 2 the journal notes: "Four men getting ready to hunt pitch to accompany the Canadians who are going for the like purpose."<sup>53</sup> The pitch, necessary to caulk the boats for the spring departure, was not easily come upon on the treeless prairie, as the party soon discovered. On February 15 the pitch hunters returned, prompting Fidler's interesting comment. The men, the trader wrote, had not

. . . seen a single Pine Tree. They returned short although they say that they went 5 successive Days Journey up the River - - but I imagine they were very short ones.<sup>54</sup>

Whether this search went up the Red Deer River or the Bow River is only a matter of conjecture, but conceivably the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 282 - 283.      <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 283 - 284.      <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 288.      <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>54</sup>MacGregor, Fidler, p. 133.



group could have covered a hundred or more miles. Fidler sent four of his men with three horses and two Blackfeet guides on another search for pitch on March 4, and two weeks later they returned with a sufficient quantity.<sup>55</sup> MacGregor believes that this second journey took the Hudson's Bay men to the Cypress Hills, a supposition based on the fact that Fidler sent a similar pitch gathering party to those forested hills the following year.<sup>56</sup> Except for two Canadians and two of Fidler's men who conveyed the horses of the two concerns to Carlton late in April, no other travelling is mentioned as having been undertaken during the first year at the new post.<sup>57</sup>

Preparations for the departure in the spring began early in the new year. February brought the beginnings of a new boat, built to help carry out the returns. Pemmican was put into forty-five pound bags, and a press was constructed to prepare the furs and hides for packing. By April 8 the new bateau was completed and all three vessels had been caulked and put into the river. Another smaller bateau cut out of a single log was made in mid-April for crossing the river.<sup>58</sup> The three groups did not depart at the same time, although they embarked at intervals of only one day. The XY men set out on April 20, the North Westers on the 21st, and

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>58</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 289.



Fidler on the 22nd.<sup>59</sup> Rather than carry the "remains" back to the Hudson Bay or Fort William, the three parties buried them inside the establishments just before their departures, as none of the companies planned to occupy the area during the summer.

Never again would so tranquil and profitable a winter be spent by fur traders at the junction of the Red Deer and the Bow as that of 1800 - 1801. Henceforth the post was destined to become at best a marginally profitable venture with overwhelming friction with the natives a constant threat. The dispositions of the area's first inhabitants was to prove as changeable as the prairie rivers near which they camped.

If Fidler's first season at Chesterfield House was calm, his second venture up the river more than compensated for this lack of excitement. Leaving Cumberland House on August 14, the party of nineteen arrived at the still intact Hudson's Bay post on September 27.<sup>60</sup> Although they found everything about the post in order, the group heard the first whisperings of trouble soon after their arrival when Blood Indians informed them that fourteen Gros Ventre men and sixty women and children had been killed about a month earlier by raiders from the south.<sup>61</sup>

Initially, the English traders made few changes in their post. The house was remudded, the chimneys repaired,<sup>62</sup> and

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 293, 314.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 294.



a new victual shed was completed by the end of October.<sup>63</sup>

A cooking tent was erected in early November and floors were laid for both the guard room and men's cabins.<sup>64</sup> Major structural changes followed the failure of the North West Company to reappear,<sup>65</sup> although the XY traders arrived on October 2.<sup>66</sup> Serious threats by the Indians and the absence of his cotenants presented Fidler with the problem of guarding their former quarters. On October 29 he began tearing down their portion of the fort and erecting a new stockade along the side of the post that had formerly separated the two operations, a task which took only two days.<sup>67</sup>

The nearby XY post suffered a similar fate when on March 3 its master, Mr. Wills, requested that he and his men be allowed to share the English post for the mutual benefit of both groups. When Fidler agreed, the XY post was ignited:

. . . we set fire to their house and cut down the stockade that the Fall Ind. might not harbour there and annoy us when we went for water.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>65</sup>Fidler learned of this in a letter from the North Saskatchewan received on October 26. (MacGregor, Fidler, p. 134.) In Saskatchewan Journals, p. xcii, Miss Johnson writes that this ". . . must have confirmed Tomison in his opinion that its object in 1800 had been to divert its opponents' attention from Athabasca."

<sup>66</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 294.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 298. The rough journal reads: "All hands took down a part of french Stockades & put up as our inner stockades was too low, also took down the French Watch house & put up at the Corner of our Stockades." (Ibid., p. 298n.)

<sup>68</sup>MacGregor, Fidler, p. 140.



One can only speculate about how Indians in a post a hundred yards to the west could have menaced water parties when the river lay only a short distance to the south. The answer to this puzzle remains pending a definitive archeological survey, but does suggest the tenuousness of some of the conclusions drawn from the journals.

The most outstanding feature of the winter of 1801 - 1802 was the unrest among the natives, a condition presumably based on the bad fortunes of the Gros Ventres during the preceeding summer. Smallpox, Fidler reported, carried away over a hundred young Fall Indians the previous summer,<sup>69</sup> while clashes with the Stones further reduced their numbers. To the native the loss of horses was almost as calamitous as human death, and the winter of 1801 - 1802 was marked by large losses of the animals, the result both of theft and the severity of the winter.<sup>70</sup>

Not only were the natives in a surly humor, but there appears to have been a considerable increase in the number about the post, particularly of Blackfeet early in the season. On September 30 Fidler received no less than seventy-two chiefs from three tribes, although only five were Gros Ventre, and three days later he recorded the fact that 1400 Indians were in the area.<sup>71</sup> This huge gathering soon dispersed so that by October 13 only seven tents of Blackfeet

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<sup>69</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 294. Fidler blamed the disease on the "Tattooed" Indians from the south who had in turn caught it from American traders on the Missouri.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 294.



remained,<sup>72</sup> and until spring the number of natives camped in the vicinity seems to have remained at a much lower number. The potential threat posed by the aboriginal warriors nevertheless must have been more obvious than it had been the year before.

Trouble with the natives began early. The XY men found themselves on October 7 so threatened by Blackfeet demanding free liquor that they were forced to arm themselves, while on November 3 the journal recorded: "Indians drinking."<sup>73</sup> Although after these minor episodes calm prevailed between the traders and Indians until late February, inter-tribal disputes threatened to expand into all out warfare and certainly greatly reduced the size of the trade. Soon after a narrowly averted clash (which Fidler claimed to have resolved) between the allied Fall and Tattood<sup>74</sup> and the Blackfeet, some of the latter apparently determined to and perhaps did take their trade to the North Saskatchewan to avoid the Falls. Such action, if fully implemented, would have very seriously damaged the returns of the small southern post. It was not fully carried out, for, as MacGregor points out, a considerable number of Blackfeet were about the post by January 8.<sup>75</sup> This Blackfoot gathering, for the purpose of a concerted military effort, was deeply regretted by Fidler, whose desperate attempts to dissuade the belligerent

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>74</sup>The "Tattood" Indians were Arapahoes, distinguished by blue tattoos on their chests. (Saskatchewan Journals, p. 294n.)

<sup>75</sup>MacGregor, Fidler, p. 136.



parties were of no avail. Fidler neglected to mention who the proposed victims were to be, leaving one to choose between the Slaves, Snakes and other southern tribes, and the Gros Ventres. On learning that the Fall nation had also assembled about the same time, the veteran trader dismissed any hope he had entertained for a prosperous season. The only major clash which appears to have taken place as a result of this planning occurred when a returning Blackfoot war party of about seventy braves chanced upon ten Snake Indians, perhaps of a horse stealing expedition, about forty miles above Chesterfield House on the "Bad" or South Saskatchewan river. The outnumbered Snakes managed to secure themselves in two holes made by hibernating bears, but were tracked to their hiding places and smoked out from them by the Blackfeet, who killed all but two of the smaller party.<sup>76</sup>

Serious trouble between the two groups of traders and the natives began on February 21, and continued almost without relief until the post was abandoned late in April.

The eventful February day began when three or four Gros Ventres knocked at the XY post gates, asking to be allowed inside. When the gates were swung open to admit them, the post was rushed by seventy well armed Indians, who swarmed into the yard and filled the men's house. The Canadians armed themselves and came very near firing on the natives inside the house, but the Gros Ventres, seeing that

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<sup>76</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, pp. 307 - 308.



some of their number must inevitably be shot, departed without violence. The Hudson's Bay post, by this time armed and alert, was not bothered by the restless Indians.<sup>77</sup>

Another group of outsiders was less fortunate than the XY men. Two North West Company servants arrived at Fidler's post on February 21 from the North Saskatchewan, which they had left January 23, travelling most of the way in the company of fourteen Iroquois and two Canadian freemen, apparently headed for the Cypress Hills to hunt. Six days from Chesterfield House the party had divided, with the two North Westers and four of the Iroquois proceeding ahead to meet the Gros Ventres to make peace and secure safe passage for the rest of the party. Two of the Iroquois in this advance party, visiting some Gros Ventres with gifts to secure their friendship, had been set upon and killed the day before the North Westers reached Fidler's house, as the remainder of the party had slept unmolested in a friendly Blackfoot camp four miles from the fort. These four divided in the morning, the Canadians setting out for Chesterfield House, while the Iroquois, ignorant of the deaths of their two companions, took gifts to the Gros Ventres, who apologized for killing their friends and offered to conduct them to the post in safety. Only half a mile from the Blackfoot camp the second pair of Iroquois were murdered by their guides, prompting Fidler's comment about the Gros Ventres that:

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 311.



Such is their behavior and manners that when they appear to be well pleased and satisfied they have the most rancorous revenge lurking in their minds.<sup>78</sup>

Fidler tried desperately to secure safe passage to his post for the remaining Canadians and Iroquois. At first he refused to trade with the guilty tribe until the party arrived safely, at the same time giving a big keg of liquor and a fathom of tobacco to their chiefs. This resulted in a favorable promise from the tribal leaders, the value of which declined when a party of Blackfeet reported that no sooner had they buried the last two Iroquois killed that the Falls had disinterred the bodies, and had removed the hands and feet from them. Four of Fidler's men were dispatched to rebury the two killed on February 25, and reported on their return that the bodies had been ". . . used in the most shocking and barbarous manner, being nearly cut to pieces: since the Blackfeet had buried them."<sup>79</sup>

The traders now changed their tactics. Despite their dislike of the Gros Ventres, they decided to resume trade with them on February 25, after extracting another promise concerning the safe conduct of the arriving freemen. Trade continued on a very limited basis however, with only two or three natives being admitted at one time to the post in view of the danger from the Gros Ventre nation, now assembled only three-quarters of a mile from Chesterfield House.<sup>80</sup>

Strangely enough, the next threat to the security of

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.



the area involved not the Gros Ventres but the Blackfeet and Tattood Indians. The dispute, which involved the death of four Tattood Indians at the hands of the Blackfeet, was settled through the mediation of the traders and large presents, but not until the post had been surrounded by armed Tattood braves while fifteen Blackfeet chiefs waited inside.<sup>81</sup>

Early in the morning of March 3 the conflict with the Gros Ventres came to a climax when a large party, well armed, was spotted approaching the post. The men hastily armed themselves and manned the bastions, but the object of the Indian wrath proved to be not the traders but the approaching Iroquois and Canadian hunters. Fidler could only watch helplessly as the natives passed his position on their murderous errand. That afternoon the Indians returned up the opposite side of the river, having (as they informed Fidler's Blackfoot hunter) killed the entire party about sixteen miles from the fort. Waving the scalps of the victims on poles, the Gros Ventres made it clear that they proposed to add others to their collection of grisly trophies. At this point Wills, the XY master, made his request of Fidler that the two groups of traders join. The new occupants of the Hudson's Bay post were given the keg shed and the cooper's shop as store houses and pitched tents in the yard for sleeping quarters. By March 4 the move had been made and Fidler could record that the garrison at the post numbered thirty-seven able bodied men; sixteen XY servants (two others,

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid.



having frozen their feet, were not included in the count), nineteen Hudson's Bay men, and the two North Westers.<sup>82</sup>

Trade with the Gros Ventres had again been stopped on March 3, but this last desperate attempt to stave off a massacre had failed to stem the tide of Indian anger. When three days later a group of Falls appeared at the post, Fidler had difficulty, he wrote, in restraining the Canadians from firing on them from the bastions in revenge for the events of the previous week. Wills suggested a bloodbath which would certainly have permanently alienated the Gros Ventres and perhaps prevented the traders from getting away alive in the spring. His plan, rejected after some thought of the consequences, involved the killing of the six responsible Gros Ventre chiefs, the hanging of the head chief of the tribe, and the murder of thirty or so of the braves, all within the post. Fidler did make repeated attempts to get a Fall chief to accompany him to the site of the massacres to bury the bodies of the dead, but apparently the chiefs were unwilling that this be done, because, having explained the deaths of the two Canadians as an accident,<sup>83</sup> they feared that the truth would be discovered as all the bodies had been scalped.<sup>84</sup> The only massacre of non-Indians

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 314 - 316. The chiefs told Fidler that the two Canadians had been led away from the Iroquois towards the post when some hot-headed braves killed them.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 317 - 318. Fidler sent a Stone Indian to the site on March 12 and was informed that all the men had died together, all had been scalped, and that one had even been decapitated.



at the prairie post during its three separate occupations, this fast moving clash with the Falls spelled the end of Fidler's endeavors on the southern plains.

During the long winter other events took place at the post which are worthy of mention, but in the journal these naturally take second place to the troubles with the Indians. Fidler gives very little detail about the events of the second winter at Chesterfield House, and his journal itself is only half as long as that of the first winter. A second pitch hunting expedition was sent to the "I ah kim me coo" hill on December 4, a journey which Fidler estimated as eighty miles, and which took only ten days to complete.<sup>85</sup> The XY master dispatched two men to "Island House" on December 14 with letters, and the party arrived back on January 31, having frozen their feet while walking guideless across the winter snow.<sup>86</sup> On February 17, after Wills had told him of a shortage of provisions on the North Branch,<sup>87</sup> Fidler dispatched an Indian there to determine whether more provisions should be stored away, as he had stopped trading meat when he obtained the quantity ordered four months earlier in the season.<sup>88</sup> The Indian returned on March 20 with a letter from James Bird at Edmonton which confirmed Wills' report.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 302. J. G. MacGregor states that these were the Cypress Hills of today. (MacGregor, Fidler, p. 133.)

<sup>86</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, pp. 303, 309.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., pp. 310 - 311. <sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 318.



Trade for the winter, severely restricted by the restlessness of the Indians, was very poor, totalling only 7495 made beaver,<sup>89</sup> about two-thirds that of the previous year. Fidler says very little about the trade itself, mentioning nothing about the quantity of provisions obtained except to note on March 27 and 29 that forty-six bags of pemmican had been made, three of which were for Fidler, along with bulk fat, marrow, back fat and bad fat.<sup>90</sup>

Preparations for the departure began as early as December 19, when gathering logs for the bateau began.<sup>91</sup> Furs were packed at the end of March, and on April 8 the bottom of a bateau thirty-four feet long and seven and a half feet wide was laid. The vessel was ready for caulking on April 16.<sup>92</sup> On April 21 all the boats had been prepared and the party left.<sup>93</sup> Embarking from the vulnerable post involved more than physical preparations, especially when the mood of the natives was in doubt. Fidler did not, as did his successors, resort to an elaborate subterfuge to get away safely as the Gros Ventres themselves departed first; going (according to Blackfoot reports) to the Missouri to form alliances with the Crow Mountain Indians and the Tattood Indians to bolster their strength for an attack on the traders and the Crows and Stones in revenge for the previous summer.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 320. This was still the largest return of any post under York Factory. (Ibid., p. xciii.)

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 320 - 321.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.



While they were gone, Fidler managed to slip away, taking only the precaution of hiring a native and his wife to scout for lurking Gros Ventres.<sup>95</sup> Fidler's remarks on that tribe on the first page of his journal for the winter sums it up in typical understatement:

. . . they appear to be a very dangerous tribe to deal with and it cannot perhaps be expected that any trader will return to this Station; our people took the precaution to join with the Canadians to prevent an attack by the Natives.<sup>96</sup>

Despite his experiences and his prediction that none would return to the area, within three years Chesterfield House was again in use.

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 293n.



## CHAPTER II

### New Chesterfield House

There is considerable confusion about the dates of the establishment and abandonment of the second Chesterfield House, or New Chesterfield House, as it is sometimes called. The only primary account dealing with the post is that of John MacDonald of Garth, the North West Company trader who was apparently the first to arrive at the location for the second occupation, and clearly dates his arrival as in 1805,<sup>1</sup> with the abandonment in the ensuing spring. MacDonald's account, however, is dated on the original March 1, 1859,<sup>2</sup> when it was apparently written at the request of a niece, and so cannot be accepted without some examination. A. S. Morton dates the establishment 1804 - 1805,<sup>3</sup> as does Hugh Dempsey,<sup>4</sup> and A. M. Johnson,<sup>5</sup> presumably because inconsistencies in MacDonald's tale indicate that it was out by one year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John MacDonald of Garth, "Autobiographical Notes," in Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, ed. by L. R. Masson (Quebec: A. Cote et Cie., 1890), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Public Archives of Canada, MG 19 A 17, "Autobiographical Notes of John MacDonald of Garth," cover.

<sup>3</sup>Morton, History, p. 511.

<sup>4</sup>J. N. Wallace, "Early Explorations Along the Bow and Saskatchewan Rivers," Alberta Historical Review, Vol. 9 No. 2 (Spring, 1961), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 298n.

<sup>6</sup>Masson notes, in reference to one episode: "Mr. MacDonald makes a mistake of one year and refers to what took place in 1804 . . . ." (Masson, Bourgeois, p. 34.)



Other writers have stuck to the original dating. E. E. Rich uses 1805 - 1806,<sup>7</sup> as does J. N. Wallace,<sup>8</sup> Marjorie Campbell,<sup>9</sup> E. Voorhis,<sup>10</sup> and Letetia Shouldice in an article in the Calgary Herald.<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, the earlier (1804 - 1805) date used by A. S. Morton will be assumed to be correct, although no contemporary record has been found to verify either position.

John MacDonald of Garth's "Autobiographical Notes" are weakened not only by the controversy about the year to which they refer, but by the fact that they were written by a very old man.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, as the sole primary discussion of the post, these "Notes" must be relied upon for this account, just as they have formed the basis of many others.<sup>13</sup> They are sketchy, full of adventures which may or may not be imaginary, and lack the detail which only a contemporary account

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<sup>7</sup>Rich, The Hudson's Bay Company, p. 235.

<sup>8</sup>Wallace, "Early Explorations," p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>M. W. Campbell, The Saskatchewan (New York: Rinehart and Co. Inc., 1950), p. 293.

<sup>10</sup>E. Voorhis, Historical Forts and Trading Posts of the French Regime and the English Fur Trading Companies (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1930), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Letetia M. Shouldice, "Crumbling Ruins Tell Romantic Tale of Past Adventure," Calgary Herald, February 4, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>MacDonald was born about 1774, so was nearly 85 when the account was written. (E. E. Rich, ed., Simpson's Athabasca Journal (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1938), p. 449.

<sup>13</sup>Campbell, The Saskatchewan, p. 293; C. M. MacInnes, In the Shadow of the Rockies (London: Rivingtons, 1930), p. 174; and J. N. Wallace, "Early Explorations," p. 14 all appear to lean heavily on MacDonald of Garth's "Notes."



can give. It might be noted in this regard that as MacDonald gives no dates beyond vague statements such as "about Christmas" any historical reconstruction is almost impossible.

MacDonald apparently returned to the Saskatchewan district from Fort William in the summer of 1804. He and a Mr. Hughes<sup>14</sup> decided to take twenty-five men and four canoes as far up the Bow River as possible, in order to "explore the country and trade with the Blackfeet and Missouri Indians."<sup>15</sup> A discrepancy with the original document appears almost immediately in the Masson edition of the "Notes." MacDonald, just after leaving the junction of the two Saskatchewan rivers, met a group of Crees to whom he gave liquor and tobacco. Masson ends his version at this point, while the original continues, to tell of a young Indian who grabbed the gunnells of the canoe, demanding more. Striking his fingers, MacDonald raised his rifle and rid the boat of its unwelcomed passenger. From the poor writing and awkward sentences it is difficult to say whether the Indian was shot, but the possibility exists.<sup>16</sup>

Passing the ruins of South Branch House and the Bois d'Orignal, over the beauty of which the author rhapsodizes, the party continued to the "Elbow," where MacDonald killed an elk. Canoes were tracked on both sides of the river, a

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<sup>14</sup>Probably James Hughes, a North West Company partner.

<sup>15</sup>Masson, Bourgeois, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup>P. A. C., MG 19 A 17, "Autobiographical Notes," pp. 99 - 100. This may be an insight into MacDonald's attitude toward the natives which Masson hoped to avoid by editing out portions of the "Notes."



fact which Masson omits.<sup>17</sup> After four days against a four knot current, another event took place which stuck in the old man's mind. Stampeding buffalo almost destroyed an encampment, a disaster averted only by large fires and gun shots. At this point Masson skips past a colorful running encounter between MacDonald and a certain La Rocque and two "Grizle Bears."<sup>18</sup>

The description in the "Notes" of the destination of the group is less than helpful in determining precisely where the post was built. MacDonald writes:

We at last found a low point of wood fit for erecting stockades and houses, and I was determined to make that the end of my journey. It was at what is called New Chesterfield House. . . .<sup>19</sup>

One cannot say with certainty that the new post was established near the sites of the three earlier ones, as MacDonald's reference to "New Chesterfield House" could be to the general area as it was known in 1859 when the "Notes" were written, rather than meaning that his post was located at a place other than that used in 1800 - 1802. Fidler's journal casts more uncertainty on this issue. His men had allowed a fire used to burn the doors of the post to spread to the watch house during the preparations for departure, but an entry added later says: "The House & all is standing by the Inds. Account March 1805."<sup>20</sup> If this were indeed the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 98 - 99.

<sup>19</sup>Masson, Bourgeois, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup>Saskatchewan Journals, p. 321n.



case, MacDonald would surely have seen the ruins on his arrival, even if it were in the fall of 1805. It is even within the realm of possibility that the old buildings were renovated, perhaps by the Hudson's Bay men who followed MacDonald, and used for another season. These Hudson's Bay men are mentioned by MacDonald only once in the journal, however, and that is a fleeting reference to departure plans.

Although the fort which he erected is not described, MacDonald gives two clues to its size. "We had pickets and houses up in less than a month,"<sup>21</sup> the trader wrote, indicating that the post was very likely enclosed by a stockade and consisted of at least two "houses." The party also erected "a very large military marquise with ropes extending around it," which was used as an Indian hall.<sup>22</sup> MacDonald stated that about a hundred tents of Blackfeet were soon encamped around the new post. The chiefs he entertained on "beefsteaks, and tea, etc., which they called 'medecine [sic] water!'"<sup>23</sup> The original version relates that this name came from the drug like effect the Indians observed from the liquid.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the trader was treating the Indians to more than tea!

The unabridged version then tells of a young mounted brave who attempted to kill MacDonald, but was thwarted when the trader quickly drew a large sword which he carried along with a pair of pistols, and knocked the attacker from his

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>P. A. C., MG 19 A 17, "Autobiographical Notes," p. 99.



horse. But for this swift action, MacDonald claimed, the entire brigade would have been massacred by the large numbers of Indians assembled within the pallisade.<sup>25</sup> Indian relations were certainly less than good.

About Christmas a single Missouri Indian rode into the post to request that his tribe be admitted to trade. The messenger spoke of the state of war between his tribe and the Blackfeet, but said, according to the "Notes," ". . . we are but few, but if you will receive us as friends, we will fight our way in, and trade or fall."<sup>26</sup> MacDonald, having smoked with him, promised to treat the newcomers as he had their enemies, and the Indian departed. The nearby Blackfoot camp, about five hundred warriors strong, was informed of the visit by its scouts. Sounds of gunfire and a demand for ammunition the next morning indicated that a battle was in progress, and by that evening scouts reported that the Missouri Indians had been surrounded and would be killed in the morning. Through their lack of vigilance, the victors let the southern tribe slip away during the night, carrying off even their dead and wounded. The Blackfeet pursued them the next day, and the battle was resumed with more loss of life. Graves for the dead Blackfeet were dug, a procession took place, and the distraught relatives pierced their flesh with arrows and took part in mournful singing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 99 - 100.

<sup>26</sup>Masson, Bourgeois, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 31 - 32.



Masson edited out another episode which took place before the departure of the traders that further illustrates the temper of the plains tribes. In the spring, while his men were engaged in putting the "Boats and Canoes"<sup>28</sup> in order, MacDonald's interpreter yelled at him: "Master, save yourself, there is an Indian intends shooting you."<sup>29</sup> Seeing the culprit, MacDonald relates,

I seized his gun, put my foot upon it and broke it & then drew my dagger took hold of his Nose and cut it & was proceeding to give himself a thrashing when my interpreter came forward & said that was enough --

I took up the Gun & went to the Indian Hall in which were several Chiefs -- I threw down the gun amongst them & went into my own bed rooms . . . & seized my trusty sword & perhaps might have shed Blood but the Chiefs thronged about me, thus I had another narrow escape.<sup>30</sup>

"To meet danger more than half way is the easiest way to safety,"<sup>31</sup> MacDonald wrote, crediting the confidence of his men in his leadership to this type of quick action.

Masson's narrative resumes as the party prepared to leave the post and describes the ingenious scheme used to get the natives away from the fort so that they would not see the remaining goods (especially the tobacco, ammunition, and liquor) as they were removed. MacDonald's interpreter constructed a large kite, which was flown on a clear night when only a few young Indians were within the walls. The

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<sup>28</sup>P. A. C., MG 19 A 17, "Autobiographical Notes," p. 103. It is interesting that the North West Company should be using boats so early in the century. Perhaps MacDonald was confused about this point.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 103 - 104.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 104.



sight of this object floating over the post caused the alarm among the superstitious natives upon which the traders had counted. MacDonald summoned the important chiefs to the Indian Hall the next day, where they were shown a letter, written in unintelligible symbols by the interpreter, and purporting to be from the

Master of Life ordering them off in three days to a stated point, and bidding them not to return for several days, else they should meet a numerous army of Crees and Assiniboils [sic] who were in search of them.<sup>32</sup>

The subterfuge worked, and within five days the fort had been safely vacated. As it had departed too early in the season to pass to its destination before break up, the party merely floated down stream, but kept close watch at night, fearing treachery. The Hudson's Bay people kept close to the North Westers, ". . . but they were safer as they had large barges anchored out in the river at night."<sup>33</sup>

After the group settled at the Bois d'Orignal to procure fresh provisions, MacDonald proceeded alone, leaving his guide, Bouche, in command. When Indian horsemen were sighted, Bouche refused to break camp, as his orders had been to remain. Daybreak brought an attack in which the guide and two others were killed, as they slept in a tent pitched exactly where MacDonald's had been before his departure. Two other men were killed as they attempted to launch the canoes under

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<sup>32</sup>Masson, Bourgeoisie, p. 33.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.



which they had been sleeping.<sup>34</sup>

John MacDonald of Garth apparently rejoined his brigade later, arriving with it at Cumberland House. Here he was joined by Hughes and his brigade, the account reads, which indicates that Hughes had not been with the party on the South Saskatchewan, but had proceeded to one of the older northern establishments, contrary to the impression created at the commencement of the narrative.

From Cumberland the tale becomes more confused. MacDonald refers to a trip taken to a Forsyth, Richardson and Company post on Lake Superior to attempt to hire away servants, a journey which must have been undertaken earlier, perhaps in 1804.<sup>35</sup> The "Notes" then discuss briefly the subsequent winter which the author spent on the North Branch, after which the date 1806 appears. As two seasons trade between 1805 and 1806 is obviously impossible, and as it is known that MacDonald of Garth was stationed at Fort des Prairies from 1806 to 1808,<sup>36</sup> it seems very likely that the account must be stretched backward in time, placing the Chesterfield House venture in the years 1804 - 1805, as Professor Morton has suggested.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 35. As the XY Company (Forsyth, Richardson and Company) joined the North West Company in 1804, the account must be followed with strong reservations.

<sup>36</sup>E. E. Rich, ed., Simpson's Athabasca Journal, p. 449.

<sup>37</sup>Morton, History, p. 511.



Two letters among those in the Judson's Bay Company's official correspondence relate to this "New Chesterfield House," and confirm that some activity on the South Branch took place after Fidler's departure, and help establish when this activity ceased. Both letters are addressed from the Governor and Committee to John McNab and the Council at York Factory. The first, dated May 31, 1806, likely part of the spring packet, mentions the rates to be paid for "regular trips." The highest allowance is twenty shillings for the trip from Chesterfield to Inland House.<sup>38</sup> Obviously the writers considered the post in operation, as well they might if it had been used that season (1805 - 1806) or the one previous.

A letter dated May 21, 1807 deals more directly with the area:

7 We hope you will be able now again to explore the Southern Branch of the Saskatchewan [sic] . . . [we] have sent you a full Indent of Goods in expectation that you will maintain the Trade all around you.<sup>39</sup>

This dispatch seems to indicate that by the time the letter was written, the London Committee knew that Chesterfield House had been abandoned by their representatives; which places the date of that action at the summer of 1806 at the very latest.

J. N. Wallace, an able local historian, used Thompson's map to prove that the North West Company had not continued to

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<sup>38</sup>H. B. A., A. 6/7, "London Correspondence Book Outwards - HBC Official 1804 - 1809." fo. 80.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., fo. 105.



operate a post on the South Saskatchewan through to the amalgamation of the two trading concerns in 1821. He wrote:

On Thompson's great map he shows the locations of all the N. W. Co. Posts as they existed in 1812, but he shows no post anywhere on the Bow or South Saskatchewan rivers neither at, nor above, the junction of the Red Deer river.<sup>40</sup>

The journal of the Bow River Expedition makes not a single mention of any previous occupation, or of seeing the ruins of a post, which should be sufficient to argue that there was a definite lapse between the two occupations, an interval which almost indisputably stretched from the abandonment of New Chesterfield House by John MacDonald of Garth to the arrival of the Bow River Expedition. Several writers have suggested however that the post or posts remained open during this interval. Paul Sharp, for example, in his Whoop - up Country, devotes a paragraph to the trade of the English and Canadian traders in the area and assumes a long-lasting occupation by them. He writes:

When the Hudson's Bay Company made its peace with the Nor'Westers in 1821, it took over two posts built by its rivals in the Whoop - Up country. Chesterfield House on the South Saskatchewan near present day Empress, and Piegan Post. . . .<sup>41</sup>

Voorhis, perhaps Sharp's source, writes that:

In 1822, after the coalition of the two companies, the Hudson's Bay Co. took over the North West Co. establishment and opened Chesterfield House under Donald

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<sup>40</sup>Letter, J. N. Wallace to J. E. A. Macleod, July 9, 1923, University of Alberta, Rare Book Room, J. N. Wallace Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Paul F. Sharp, Whoop - Up Country (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 34. Sharp is also incorrect about Piegan Post, which was built by J. E. Harriott in 1832.



McKenzie.<sup>42</sup>

Other fragmentary evidence exists which may suggest that other occupations of the post during this period took place. Some excavation and exploratory work was conducted in 1966 by C. E. Watson, sponsored by the Government of Saskatchewan. Five sites were apparently investigated, three of which Watson labelled on his sketch map as trading posts. Efo1 - 1, upstream from the junction on the Red Deer River, is labelled on the map: "H. B. Co. 1810 - 1812," while another site, Efo1 - 2, is shown as a shared N. W. Co. - H. B. Co. post with a small XY post nearby and is dated 1800 - 1805, with the XY Co. post dated 1800. This second site is below the junction, and is followed, at a site even further below, by a post labelled as Donald McKenzie's, site Efo1 - 4. Watson gives no sources of information for his datings or locations, and one must assume that any real archeological evidence of a conclusive nature has yet to appear, as the documentary evidence contradicts that of the survey over many points, notably the dates assigned to the first occupations.<sup>43</sup>

In view of the overwhelming evidence, we may be certain that any connection between Chesterfield House and the Bow River Expedition was not that of a physical take over by the

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<sup>42</sup>Voorhis, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup>Map is untitled. Accompanying notebook is Chesterfield Flats Survey Material, collected by C. E. Watson, September, 1966. Catalogued by J. S. N. and G. C. R. (Rumbolt). The material, a Xerox copy, was given the author by John Nicks, a participant in the cataloguing.



Hudson's Bay Company of an existing post. The connection, which will be shown elsewhere to have existed, was entirely one of knowledge and experience.



### CHAPTER III

#### Bow River Expedition - The Scheme

The amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 made possible a dramatic reorganization of the fur trade throughout the operating sphere of the new concern. The absolute monopoly which the Hudson's Bay Company now held over much of its trading area made such an overhaul possible, while the poor returns of both predecessors immediately prior to the union made reorganization imperative.

Union resulted almost immediately in consolidation of the trade, the closing of posts, and a drastic reduction in the numbers of men at all levels. Much of the early work of recasting the structure of the inland trade was carried on under the instructions of Nicholas Garry,<sup>1</sup> a member of

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholas Garry came to Rupert's Land to oversee the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, and to get the signatures of the former Factors and Partners of the two concerns on the Deed Poll, the formal document of the union. His route, outlined in Nicholas Garry, "The Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy - Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822 - 1835," Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Second Series, Vol. VI (May, 1900), was from London by packet to New York, thence by stage and steamer to Montreal, and by canoe to Fort William, the Red River colony, Norway House, and York Factory. From York he sailed back to England on a regular Company vessel.



the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company who traveled through parts of Rupert's Land in 1821, and by George Simpson,<sup>2</sup> from amalgamation Governor of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land. The problems which they encountered led to the attempt to reopen the trade on the South Saskatchewan or Bow River in 1822.

One of the primary problems with which Garry, and later Simpson, sought to deal was the large number of unneeded men in the west; men who under the conditions of vigorous competition had been needed to maintain the many posts which contended for the trade of overlapping or identical areas, or who had been engaged simply to bolster the manpower of the rival concerns in hotly contested areas. Simpson found that in 1821 there were twice as many men employed in the fur trade as necessary.<sup>3</sup>

Simpson undertook the task of reducing the number of men engaged in the service with his usual energy. In the first three months of his tenure as Governor of the Northern Department, he decided to cut the £60,000 annual wages by £15,000, a task which he thought would necessitate discharging at least two hundred and fifty men.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>George Simpson was appointed Governor locum tenens in November, 1820, and became co - Governor along with William Williams at the time of the union. His charge was the Northern Department, which, when Williams retired in 1826, was broadened to include all the Hudson's Bay territory and operations, a post which he held until his death in 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Morton, History, p. 631.

<sup>4</sup>R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821 - 31, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. III (London: The Champlain Society, 1940), p. lvi. Introduction by H. A. Innis.



The Deed Poll, the terms of union signed by the North West Company partners and the Hudson's Bay Company factors included arrangements for the retirement of a specified few of these officers.<sup>5</sup> If they chose not to return to Canada or England, officers could settle on lots of up to a thousand acres in the Red River colony.<sup>6</sup> Servants were less fortunate. The Committee arranged for those men who were to be discharged to be transported to the Red River with their families, and to be given twenty or thirty acres of land, seed, tools, and ammunition at the expense of the Company;<sup>7</sup> but for the dismissed man this was little enough compensation for what must amount to a complete loss of income. Any scheme which could offer employment to some of these men without loss to the Company would have been both desirable and fair.

Simpson was also concerned with putting the trade back on a paying basis, and the various areas had to be reassessed as to their value to the Company. The North Branch of the Saskatchewan, controlled from Fort Edmonton after the union, was no longer profitable, and was actually losing money. Simpson's report to the London Committee in July,

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<sup>5</sup>Seven of the eighty five shares in the new company were reserved for retired officers. (Morton: History, p. 625.)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 633. Many of the officers and servants had acquired native families and preferred to remain with them in the West rather than leave them behind or face the scorn of a more genteel society.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 632.



1822, discusses the problem, and although the reference is in the context of his proposed reorganization of the trade, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his statement. The loss on the North Branch that season, he wrote, ". . . is very little short of £4000."<sup>8</sup> To a profit - minded Governor, a loss of this magnitude demanded action.

The decline in revenue from the North Branch can be attributed to a variety of related factors, but was basically the result of over - exploitation during the years of fierce competition, when the comparatively accessible Saskatchewan was very thoroughly trapped by both companies. Furs became scarcer, and the returns ceased to justify the expense of the outfits. Furthermore, during the years of competition, the North Saskatchewan had been over manned by both sides. After the union in 1821, it appears that in the Saskatchewan Department former North West Company posts were generally abandoned in favor of those of the Hudson's Bay Company,<sup>9</sup> but that the number of men was still more than the profit of their trading could bear.

An aspect of the trade on the Saskatchewan which may have seemed to be important to Simpson was the threat of American traders from the Missouri moving into what had always been the virtual preserve of the Canadian and

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<sup>8</sup>H. B. A. D.4/85, "Governor George Simpson's Report to the Governor and Committee in London," July 16, 1822, fo. 16. This appears in Fleming, Minutes, p. 34<sup>0</sup> also.

<sup>9</sup>Morton, History, p. 630.



English traders, the trade of the Indians between the North Saskatchewan and the Missouri, this centred in 1821 at Fort Edmonton and Carlton House.

While it is very difficult to determine exactly when American traders appeared on the upper Missouri,<sup>10</sup> the timing of the more important endeavors on that river probably provides a key to the understanding of the American activity in the region.

The first record of Americans on the upper Missouri is that of the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804 - 1806. These two explorers and their parties passed through the area outbound in April through August, 1805, and returned through it in July and August of 1806. Since this was not a trading expedition, although various tribes may have been promised posts in their country,<sup>11</sup> no commercial ties were established in the area, but the mere presence of Americans would very likely have had some effect on the Indians. On July 27, 1806, near the Marias River, one of Lewis' men killed a Blackfoot in a scuffle over a stolen rifle. This is the incident on which most of the hostility of the Blackfeet to the Americans has been blamed, a hostility which may not have been, in fact, a result of this early killing

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<sup>10</sup>"Upper Missouri," for the purposes of this discussion, may be understood to refer to that portion of the Missouri River upstream from its junction with the Yellowstone River.

<sup>11</sup>John Bakeless, ed., The Journals of Lewis and Clark, (Winnipeg: The New American Library of Canada Limited, 1964), p. 347.



at all.<sup>12</sup>

The next American movement of any size in the region was an expedition led by Manuel Lisa which established a post, Fort Manuel or Fort Lisa, at the junction of the Yellowstone and Bighorn rivers. This was the first post on the upper rivers,<sup>13</sup> and although Lisa had intended to trade with the Blackfeet, his efforts were unsuccessful, though a profitable season with the Crow Indians served to compensate him. Chittenden implies that Lisa, by going among the Crows instead of up the Missouri to the Blackfeet, may have been responsible for much future trouble.<sup>14</sup> In 1809 the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company was formed, and Manuel Lisa, one of the founders, led its first venture up the Missouri. His post on the Yellowstone was reopened and transferred to the new company. From Fort Lisa early in 1810 about thirty men were dispatched under Andrew Henry and Pierre Menard for the Three Forks of the Missouri where they established a post. Trapping expeditions were

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 350n. Bakeless' note deals with this subject:

"In 1807, the Canadian explorer, David Thompson, found the Blackfeet still watching the Missouri to avenge the 'murder' by Lewis, whose name he mentions. But the St. Louis trader, Manuel Lisa, found that some of the Blackfeet justified Lewis. The long-continued hostility of the Blackfeet is often, rather dubiously, attributed to this incident."

<sup>13</sup>Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, American Culture and Economics Series, No. I (Stanford: Academic Reprints, 1954), I, 119.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.



dispatched, and one of these sent up the Jefferson River was set upon by Blackfeet, who killed five of the Americans. The survivors returned to the new post, where Henry and his men settled down to wait for the attack which they seem to have felt was imminent. After waiting for a month inside the fort, impatience ruled and another hunting party was dispatched. This time three hunters were killed by Blackfeet, and it was decided to withdraw, the majority of the men returning to Fort Lisa, while a small group led by Henry crossed the divide and established another post at Henry's Fork, on the Snake River.<sup>15</sup>

Lisa's ventures in the area came to an end in 1811 when Fort Lisa was abandoned, owing not only to the hostility of the Blackfeet, but also to a damaging fire among the stockpiled furs of the Missouri Fur Company and the trade restrictions of the War of 1812.<sup>16</sup>

Andrew Henry withdrew his post at Henry's Fork in 1812, leaving the upper Missouri virtually abandoned until 1820.<sup>17</sup> Before the area was vacated, the famous Pacific Fur Company overland expedition to Astoria traversed it. In 1811 and early 1812, a party of sixty-five people, led

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<sup>15</sup>Paul Chrisler Phillips, The Fur Trade (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), II, 264. Phillips states that Henry remained at the Three Forks only long enough to receive supplies to be sent him from the Bighorn post, and points out that Chittenden has Henry at the Three Forks fighting Blackfeet for the summer before moving on. (See Chittenden, I, 144.)

<sup>16</sup>Phillips, II, 268 - 269.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 390.



by Wilson P. Hunt and including Donald McKenzie, passed through the area on their way to the mouth of the Columbia where they met the sea expedition which had preceded them and built Astoria. This was Donald McKenzie's first venture into the Blackfoot country, but he was destined to return.

A renewed American interest and activity in the upper Missouri began about 1820 that was likely to be viewed with a certain amount of alarm by the English and Canadian traders. The fur trade within the boundaries of the United States had in 1816 been restricted to American citizens, and in order to enforce the new regulation, President Monroe proposed sending an army expedition to build a post on the Yellowstone River.<sup>18</sup> The Yellowstone Expedition itself was a fiasco,<sup>19</sup> although a related scientific expedition was dispatched under Major S. H. Long which filed a report significant only for its incorrectness. The area, Long stated, was uninhabitable by agricultural peoples,<sup>20</sup> a viewpoint which gave a long respite to the fur traders.<sup>21</sup>

In 1819, Lisa, possibly spurred by the public interest created by the proposed Yellowstone Expedition, reorganized

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<sup>18</sup>The American Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, stated the objectives of the Yellowstone Expedition as "part of a system of measures which had for its objects the protection of our northwestern frontier and the greater extension of the fur trade." (Ibid., p. 392.)

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Chittenden, II, 584.

<sup>21</sup>Phillips, II, 393.



the Missouri Fur Company preparatory to making a new effort to trade on the upper Missouri. He died before he could start on the first expedition, and it was for various reasons<sup>22</sup> not until 1821 that the Company undertook its first expedition, led by Joshua Pilcher, Lisa's successor. Near the former Fort Lisa Pilcher and his party built a post which they named Fort Benton, and by the next year had three hundred men trading in the regions of the Yellowstone and upper Missouri. The value of the furs sent down in 1822 was \$25,000.<sup>23</sup>

Early in 1823, Pilcher sent Robert Jones and Michael Immel to the Three Forks, the location abandoned by Henry in 1812, to endeavor to intercept the Blackfeet who frequently hunted in the region. After collecting fifty packs of furs without having seen an Indian, the party left the Three Forks to return to Fort Benton, a return that seven of them never completed. Near the present site of Billings, Montana, the men, twenty nine in all,<sup>24</sup> were attacked by Blackfeet. Jones and Immel were among those killed, and the loss to the Missouri Fur Company of their services was as serious as that of the \$15,000 worth of equipment and furs which were taken.<sup>25</sup> The Missouri Fur Company with-

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>24</sup>Chittenden, I, 153.

<sup>25</sup>Phillips, II, 395.



drew from the upper Missouri in 1823, and never returned.

In 1822, William H. Ashley and Andrew Henry formed the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, an endeavor which had as its object an expedition to ascend the Missouri to the Three Forks, where white trappers employed for the purpose would spend three years hunting. No posts were to be established, because the partners thought that they would be too expensive and stationary for the type of hunting which they hoped to carry on. The loss of a number of horses stolen by a band of Assiniboines prevented the expedition from passing up the Missouri as far as the Great Falls, as had been intended, and a small post was built at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. From this, groups of men were dispatched into the surrounding areas, with one group wintering up the Missouri at its junction with the Musselshell.<sup>26</sup> In the spring of 1823, Henry set out with a party from the Yellowstone post, and Chittenden informs us that the group was attacked by Blackfeet near the Great Falls with the loss of four lives in June, 1823.<sup>27</sup> The survivors then returned to the Yellowstone.

The Ashley and Henry interests built another post at the site of Fort Benton (which had recently been deserted by the Missouri Fur Company) in the fall of that year, but this was vacated in 1824 when the Rocky Mountain Fur Company shifted its operations south west to the safer Great Basin

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<sup>26</sup>Chittenden, I, 156.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 264.



and Snake valley region. The upper Missouri country was once again abandoned by the Americans.<sup>28</sup>

Late in 1821, John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company received offers from former North West Company employees to unite with it. Ramsay Crooks, an associate of Astor, apparently was in contact with James Hughes and Alexander MacDonell about this matter, and wrote that "Something might be done, from the upper Missouri to the Saskatchewan. The Missouri is a better base of supplies than Winnipeg."<sup>29</sup> Crooks did not carry the plan through, and his company lost the opportunity presented it.

Although actual American trade on the upper Missouri may not have been a real threat to the traditional Hudson's Bay Company territory, as the various efforts were largely unsuccessful in making any inroads into the Blackfoot trade; interest in the region shown by the Americans may have been the cause of considerable concern to the English traders. The desire to beat the Americans into the upper Missouri may have been a strong motivation to them, stronger than any fear of the American competition which existed in 1821.

To the three problems confronting the amalgamated concern in 1821; excess men, dwindling profits, and American competition; only two other considerations need be added to

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., II, 958. The first post, at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri was abandoned in the fall of 1823. The post at the Bighorn was abandoned in 1824. (Ibid., p. 964.)

<sup>29</sup>Phillips, p. 398.



explain the renewed interest in the South Saskatchewan. The basic raisons d'etre of the various Chesterfield Houses had been a desire to tap what was commonly thought to be an area very rich in furs, to use this as a base for trade to the Missouri, and to provide a means of dealing with the Blackfoot, Piegan, and Blood Indians in their own lands to reduce the pressure which these tribes placed on the North Saskatchewan. While these ideas had proven to be unworkable when attempted by earlier traders at Chesterfield House, they died hard and in general figured in the development of the Bow River Expedition, as the discussion of the evolution and motivation of that effort will show.

The Hudson's Bay Company's James Bird, in charge of the Saskatchewan district from 1804 to 1816, as he had been in 1799 - 1800,<sup>30</sup> seems to have been the earliest to discuss a possible return to the South Saskatchewan after Chesterfield House was abandoned. Bird indisputably knew of the earlier posts in the area,<sup>31</sup> and if a link between the Bow River Expedition and the Chesterfield Houses is to be established, James Bird is certainly a large part of that link. The fact that he was peripherally involved at least in Fidler's work on the South Saskatchewan, and later

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<sup>30</sup> Rich, Simpson's Athabasca Journal, p. 429, and Saskatchewan Journals, p. lxiv.

<sup>31</sup> Not only was Bird active on the North Saskatchewan in 1799 - 1802, but he had, in fact, set Fidler's expedition in motion in 1800 when he was in charge of the Saskatchewan district. (Above, p. 6, and Saskatchewan Journals, pp. 253, 293, lxxviii.)



presented a major plan to Garry in 1821, should be sufficient to authenticate this contention.

The first reference found after 1806 to the possibility of again venturing up the South Saskatchewan is in the Fort Edmonton journal of 1813. In December of that year, James Bird, the journalist, mentioned a conversation he had had with his counterpart at the nearby North West Company post. This trader had informed him that the Canadians planned to build establishments in the Muddy River (Piegan) Indian country, by way of the Columbia River, which would reduce the trade at Fort Edmonton and if the plan succeeded as hoped, the North Westers could gather a portion of the beaver thought to be so abundant near the Missouri River. Bird's answer to this threat was short but very revealing. "A plan of this nature can however always be frustrated," he wrote in the journal, "by forming a Settlement near the Mountain [sic] in the South Branch River."<sup>32</sup>

Early in the summer of 1821,<sup>33</sup> Bird sent a memorandum to Nicholas Garry which proposed a hunting expedition to the Bow River and beyond.<sup>34</sup> The memorandum, which Garry revised for his own use, was a detailed plan for what was to become the Bow River Expedition. Bird suggested that a party of about sixty voyageurs<sup>35</sup> be sent towards the sources

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<sup>32</sup>H. B. A., B.6./a/12, "Edmonton - Post Journal, 1813 - 1814," December 19, 1813, fo. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Possibly July 8. (See Appendix A, infra, p. 159.)

<sup>34</sup>Appendix A, infra, pp. 159 - 160, contains the memo.

<sup>35</sup>Garry questioned the value of former Hudson's Bay men for the adventure. (Appendix A, infra, p. 160.)



of the Missouri (Garry, in his version, refers to the South Branch also<sup>36</sup>), with thirty of these to be employed at a settlement near the junction of the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers to trade the Blackfeet and Assiniboinés for fox, beaver, provisions, and hides. Bird felt that the trade with these prairie tribes would be sufficiently profitable to recover the cost of the inexpensive outfit.

A hundred beaver hunters, "Iroquois, halfbreeds and free Canadians"<sup>37</sup> were to accompany the expedition, as Bird thought that the natives were too indolent to be employed as trappers. These hunters would proceed in two groups, one to accompany the boats on land up the South Saskatchewan, while the other might follow the foothills from Fort Edmonton in company with the Piegiens.<sup>38</sup> The veteran trader recommended that the consent of the Piegiens be obtained for the undertaking after they had been informed of its objectives, and that an advanced party of hunters be sent to build a fort or store in which to place the goods when the brigade arrived at its destination.

James Bird, in the memorandum, stated that he believed that few beaver would be found north of the more northerly branches of the Missouri, and that for this reason the post

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<sup>36</sup>Garry, "Diary," p. 197.

<sup>37</sup>H. B. A., E.11/2, "Nicholas Garry - Correspondence," fo. 126.

<sup>38</sup>Bird refers to the departure point as "Fort Augustus." This was the name of the former North West Company post at the same location as the Hudson's Bay's Fort Edmonton.



on the South Saskatchewan would be impractical for the trappers. He recommended that the principal settlement be formed on "an Island which if my information is good, lies between the waters of the two Rivers,"<sup>39</sup> but suggested that this could easily be checked by the advance party, which Bird thought should be led by John Rowand and James Pruden. Here the original memorandum ends, and it is interesting to note that Garry's version omits any reference to Rowand or Pruden, forwarding only the names of Clarke and Heron, but not in the context of this advanced party. In fact, Garry's memorandum omits any mention of an advance party, perhaps because Garry was more certain of the value of the enterprise than was Bird. Bird's version carries a penned in comment by William McGillivray which states, in part, that "Mr. Donald McKenzie . . . would be the fittest person to lead the Expedition."<sup>40</sup>

However, before Donald McKenzie was approached, it appears that Colin Robertson was offered the posting. In a letter complaining bitterly of his treatment in the union of 1821, Robertson, writing to Moffat, mentions the offer made to him:

. . . my eulogy was interrupted by the Directors of the Hudson's Bay Co. who entered with a new appoint-

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<sup>39</sup>H. B. A., E.11/2, "Nicholas Garry - Correspondence," fo. 127. A footnote in Garry, "Diary," p. 197n, refers to this as "Bad Water Lake," presumably today's Pakowki Lake.

<sup>40</sup>H. B. A., E.11/2, "Nicholas Garry - Correspondence," fo. 127.



ment, the Bow River Expedition. 'Oh, Mr. Garry,' I replied, 'it is too wide a jurisdiction for ... Mr. Robertson. I'll stick to Norway House, if you will allow me.' 'Oh no,' says Mr. Garry (who was a little deaf), 'it is no wild speculation. Mr. William McGillivray and Mr. Bird says it abounds in Beaver.'"<sup>41</sup>

It is certainly significant in the initial stages of the planning of the Bow River Expedition that Garry traveled through Rupert's Land with William McGillivray, and was accompanied for almost a month by James Bird.<sup>42</sup> Since much of the planning for the reorganization of the trade was undoubtedly discussed during this trip, it is one of the weaknesses of any account of the evolution of the scheme that no records exist to illustrate the extent to which plans were advanced beyond the initiating memorandum presented to Garry at least thirteen days<sup>43</sup> before he was joined by Bird. A copy of the memorandum was probably sent to the Governor and Committee in London, and Simpson may have been largely influenced in his later planning by Bird's idea as advanced by Garry.

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<sup>41</sup>E. E. Rich, ed., Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. II (London: The Champlain Society, 1939), pp. 163 166. A footnote on page 163 reads: "Robertson to Moffat." This also appears in H. B. A., E/10/2, "Colin Robertson - Correspondence Books 1814 - 1822," fo. 208.

<sup>42</sup>The entry in Garry's diary for July 21 states in part: "We now travel in two Canoes, Mr. Bird accompanying me . . . and Mr. McGillivray." (Garry, "Diary," p. 118.) The entry for August 16 reads, again in part: ". . . parted with much Regret with Mr. Bird, whom to the Last I found useful and kind." (Ibid., p. 146.)

<sup>43</sup>McGillivray's note on Bird's memorandum is dated July 8, 1821, (See Appendix) while Garry's first reference to Bird is dated July 21. (Ibid., p. 118.)



Francis Heron, who had succeeded James Bird at Edmonton as district master in 1817, a post which he held until 1821, exerted considerable influence on the plans for the trading endeavor up the South Saskatchewan.<sup>44</sup> As early as August 17, 1821, Heron wrote Simpson from Norway House to volunteer to lead or share command of the proposed expedition.<sup>45</sup> The project would be successful if it were well supported, Heron wrote, for which one hundred to one hundred and fifty men would be sufficient. Heron's dissatisfaction with the limited variety of tasks at his present charge was also expressed in the letter as a reason for his desire to take part in the new venture, but the unrest he felt was put forward in much stronger terms in a letter he sent to Garry the same day.<sup>46</sup>

Slightly less than a month later, Simpson, then at York Factory, penned a reply to Heron's request.<sup>47</sup> The letter is short, acknowledging Heron's earlier letter and his observations about "the projected expedition towards the sources of the Missouri."<sup>48</sup> The Governor remarked that the expediency of the project would be considered by the

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<sup>44</sup>Rich, Simpson's Athabasca Journal, p. 442. Rich states that Heron was near Cumberland in 1821 - 1822.

<sup>45</sup>H. B. A., D.4/116, "Volume of Letters Received by Governor Simpson July 1821 - August 1822 forwarded by him to London, 1822," fo. 6. Letter of August 17, 1821.

<sup>46</sup>H. B. A., E.11/2, "Nicholas Garry - Correspondence," fos. 40 - 41.

<sup>47</sup>H. B. A., D.4/1, "Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Book Outwards (General) 1821 - 1822," fo. 8. Letter of September 13.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



Council the following season, and that if it were to be approved, he would recommend Heron be given an "important charge."<sup>49</sup> Finally, the fledgling Governor asked the young trader<sup>50</sup> for further and fuller details of his estimates of the expenses likely to be incurred on such a scheme.

During the winter of 1821 - 1822, Governor Simpson travelled inland, and on January 14 arrived at Moose Lake where he found Heron in charge and was treated with "great hospitality."<sup>51</sup> Heron agreed to accompany Simpson on to Cumberland House, and remained with the Governor until January 29, when he returned to Moose Lake.<sup>52</sup> Simpson's journal gives only a sketchy account of the results of the conversations between the two men, but it appears to have been very important in the development of the plan for the expedition to the South Branch. The entry for January 28 reads, in Simpson's hurried script:

Had a great deal of Conversation with Mr. Heron relative to South Branch Expedition he thinks it will require 100 engaged serts. & 150 half breeds & Indians but thinks it necessary to remove Carlton to the South branch & abandon Edmonton as the Indians Who frequent the place are from the Country about to be pitched [?] 10 Boats 7 10 Canoes will [?] be sufficient to go in and in addition to a [?] valuable Trade in Furs he thinks that a quantity of Tallow Provisions and Tongues [?] may be collected. -- wrote a letter to

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Heron was born in 1794, so he would have been 27 or 28 in 1821. (Rich, Simpson's Athabasca Journal, p. 442.)

<sup>51</sup>H. B. A., D.3/3, "Governor George Simpson - Journal 1821 - 1822," fo. 16.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., fo. 18. January 29.



McKenzie relative to the summer arrangements.<sup>53</sup>

Heron's ideas, just as James Bird's before him, had been applied to the plans of the new endeavor.

Governor Simpson passed back through Moose Lake on his way to Red River, and the journal records but a hint of his conversation with Heron on February 2. He was, the journalist wrote,

Occupied with Mr. Heron in making up an Estimate of the expenses likely to be incurred in the Missouri Expedition which comes to what I calculated when the subject was discussed by the Council about £10,000.<sup>54</sup>

The two entries above raise two questions, the answers to which are not evident. The letter which Simpson mentioned having written to McKenzie is not to be found, but one must infer that Simpson had by this time decided to include Donald McKenzie in the expedition. As for the reference to the Council's discussion of the subject, no evidence of this can be found in the minutes of the meeting of August, 1821.<sup>55</sup> One can only assume that the Council must have discussed the project without any formal resolution being made.

When Simpson reached the Red River, he apparently made enquiries among the local Indians about the district of which Heron had spoken so highly, and included a hint of this intelligence in his diary entry for February 7:

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., January 28.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., fo. 20. February 2.

<sup>55</sup>Fleming, Minutes of Council, pp. 1 - 11.



The Saulteaux or Mingos state that the Country to the N. W. of the Upper Ho. is very rich in Beaver it approaches the South branch of the Saskatchewan [sic] & Corresponds with the information recd. from Heron relative to that Country but the Indians of this District (Mingos (Bungees)) are afraid of the tribes on [two words illegible] which prevents their extending for furs.<sup>56</sup>

The Upper House Simpson mentions was probably Fort Qu'Appelle,<sup>57</sup> beyond which the Saulteaux would be unlikely to pass, through fear of the Sioux and Woodlands Cree.

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<sup>56</sup>H. B. A., D.3/3, "Governor George Simpson - Journal 1821 - 1822," fo. 22.

<sup>57</sup>Rich, discussing Simpson's winter journey in 1821 - 1822, says: "From Moose Lake he made his way to Swan River and the upper Assiniboine, and so to Fort Qu'Appelle and Brandon House." (Rich, The Hudson's Bay Company, p. 416.) While A. S. Morton states that at the union of the two trading concerns ". . . Brandon House and Qu'Appelle (on Beaver Creek) were temporarily closed," (Morton, History, p. 630) he also writes that the North West Company's Fort Esperance was combined with the Beaver Creek House at the time of the union (Ibid., p. 437.) This agrees with a later statement made in an article (A. S. Morton, "Five Fur Trade Posts on the Lower Qu'Appelle River, 1787 - 1819," Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada (Ottawa, 1941), Third series, XXXV, II, 91.) In another article, dealing with posts on the upper Assiniboine in the period 1791 - 1871, Morton states that "During that period there were only three years, 1821 - 4, when there was no fort in the region." (A. S. Morton, "The Posts of the Fur - Traders on the Upper Assiniboine River," Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada (Ottawa, 1942), Third series, XXXVI, II, 114.) Similarly, the Qu'Appelle was abandoned, as Morton states, "The lower Qu'Appelle River ceased to have a fort in 1819. . . ." (Morton, "Five Fur Posts," p. 91.) While Morton states in his History that Brandon House was abandoned after the union of the fur companies (Morton, History, p. 630), in the same work he refers to Simpson's passage by the post in 1822 (Ibid., p. 695.) It may be safely assumed from all this that the post which Simpson refers to as "Upper Ho." was either Brandon House, or more likely (because it was further up country) the Beaver Creek Fort Qu'Appelle. Both were a considerable distance from the South Branch.



Francis Heron, likely because of a request for his ideas in full, sent Simpson a twelve page letter dated March 14 which is, in effect, a detailed plan for the excursion up the South Branch.<sup>58</sup> The letter was, Heron stated, intended to present his ideas on the subject of the South Saskatchewan, and to prove that the North Branch could be abandoned.

The purpose of the expedition, as Heron saw it, was to establish a number of posts from the mouth of the South Saskatchewan to the Missouri, and to make them formidable enough would require (aside from gentlemen) one hundred and fifty engages and an equal number of trappers. The required numbers could easily be secured if the trappers were to be guaranteed sufficiently high prices, but they should agree to accept the directions of the Company when on the expedition.

In discussing the outfit, Heron felt that the quantity required could be reduced if all the necessary staples were issued to the men before the departure of the brigade, freeing the trading goods for the Indians. Since he felt that only the Crees wore clothing for any purpose other than just ornamentation, they could best be served from a post opposite Carlton, thus sparing the brigade the problem of transporting textiles further than necessary. The principal goods for the other new posts would be tobacco, guns, and ammunition as well as knives, hatchets, beads and kettles.

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<sup>58</sup>H. B. A., D.4/116, "Simpson Inwards," fos. 29 - 35.



The first post proposed by Heron would be built on the South Saskatchewan at a point not further than fifteen miles from the North Branch, and would be designed to serve the Stone Indians (lessening the danger this tribe would present to passing brigades by making the Indians feel dependent on the Company for supplies and other goods) and the Crees. Heron felt that the Crees should be encouraged to trade at Green Lake (to the north west of Carlton), to keep them in the woods and hence more productive in furs. The first new post would return primarily provisions, Heron was confident, and would be useful in supplying brigades travelling up the North Saskatchewan.

The second post which Heron envisaged would have been located at the junction of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers and would serve as the main provisioning post for the expedition, although tolerable returns of beaver, fox, and robes could be expected. Trappers could be employed in the region about this establishment killing the beaver which the indolent natives had allowed to accumulate. At this juncture, a story about a freeman who killed ten beaver a day on a trip south from Edmonton was related to prove the potential value of the region. The second post would serve all the Slave tribes,<sup>59</sup> which Heron estimated at 11,000 individuals.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>"Slaves" was a term commonly used to refer to the Indian tribes we would describe as the Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegans, and sometimes Sarcee.

<sup>60</sup>Heron arrived at this figure in the following manner: There were 500 tents of Blackfeet, 300 tents of Bloods, 500 - 600 tents of Piegans, 500 tents of Fall Indians ( a



Heron then continued by outlining the characteristics and tribal areas of the various groups,<sup>61</sup> and concluded his discussion of the second post by claiming that it would be very convenient for the prairie tribes, often massacred en route to the North Saskatchewan to trade. The fact that the Indians found the posts convenient in this sense would add greatly to their security from attack and any resentment which they might feel could easily be overcome by supplying them with traps and encouraging them to join the hunters. Further control could always be exerted by withholding guns and ammunition, and by the use of a few rockets. Rockets, Heron felt, would be sufficient to prevent attack by local Indians when the post was undermanned in the summer, and by Crow or Flathead war parties.

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term synonymous with Gros Ventre) and 120 tents of Sarcees. Since each tent housed from five to six people, there would be about 11,000 Indians in the area. Heron wrote that any error in this calculation would be on the side of modesty.

<sup>61</sup>Heron stated, in essence, that the Bloods, Blackfeet, and Piegans were linguistically similar, while the Fall and Sarcee (Heron spells it "Sussee") were unrelated to each other or their neighbors. There were, he said, an indefinite number of chiefs whose influence was proportionate to their fame as warriors, and continued if they became notably orators or doctors. The tribes would rendezvous in the spring (often in camps of a thousand tents) when plans for the following summer for war parties, hunting, and guards would be made. Fall saw the breakup of the large camps, and the smaller tribal groups were more stationary in the winter, making it a safer season for trappers. While none of the tribes seemed to claim definite areas, they could be associated with them. The Blackfeet and Sarcees considered the land on the north side of the South Saskatchewan theirs, with the Sarcees "higher up." The Bloods were to be found south west of the Blackfeet, while the Piegans occupied the lands near the mountains, from the Bow to the Missouri. The Fall Indians camped along the Missouri, Heron wrote, towards the "Big Bellies" with whom they shared their language.



Exactly where Heron proposed building the third post is not clear due to the names of the rivers to which he refers. It was to go, he wrote, as far up "Bull Pond River"<sup>62</sup> as was navigable by boats or canoes. "Bull Pond River" discharged high up the Bow, Heron stated, and was connected by excellent beaver country with the "Pigion River," a tributary or the Missouri. The Milk River was dismissed as being too "low down country," and would involve too much trouble and delay because of the distance by way of it to the head waters of the Missouri. Furthermore, Heron suspected, the Milk would be exposed to a great deal of danger from war parties in the travelling season. One can only assume that by "Bull Pond River" Heron referred to what is today the Old Man River and its tributaries, the Belly and St. Mary's Rivers. The "Pigion River" to which he alludes was probably the Marias River, the only large stream, aside from the Milk River, which approaches the sources of the Belly or St. Mary's River. The Bow River, which runs south east from a point west of present day Calgary to its junction with the Old man River, is too far north to furnish any access to the Missouri system.

Heron's third proposed post would be used, his letter states, by the Piegans and Fall Indians who had been trading at Rocky Mountain House or Fort Edmonton. It would take

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<sup>62</sup>The "Bull Pond River" appears on Arrowsmith's 1834 map as a southward flowing stream relatively similar in course to the St. Mary's River.



in beaver, robes, foxes, and provisions; and would serve as a depot for outfits and returns from establishments beyond the height of land towards the Missouri. Employment for some of the hunters could be found in the area.

Finally, Heron proposed a post on the part of the "Pigion River" nearest the "Bull Pond River," assuming that the former was navigable to its mouth. This post would serve a dual role, not only as a trading establishment for the Piegan and Fall Indians, but as another depot, this time for the posts which might be built on the Missouri. Some of the trappers could be used near this position. While circumstances would determine the numbers of additional posts which might be established in the region of the Missouri; Heron stressed that if the expedition was to reach the farthest extremes it would have to depart early in the first spring, as late in the summer the prairie rivers became too shallow to navigate.

Heron's letter continued, listing other changes which he felt would make the operation of the trade in general more profitable,<sup>63</sup> then made some suggestions for the reduction of expenses for the new endeavor. Provisions, he felt, would cost little as they would be largely available in the

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<sup>63</sup>Heron's plans were as follows: The "Thickwoods Crees" from Fort Edmonton would be shifted to Lesser Slave Lake, and the outfit for the latter would be increased by 70 or 80 pieces. Moose lake would be abandoned in favor of Red Deer's Lake, which would be safer because of its greater distance from the plains. The "Swampy ground Stones" and the rest of the Crees would be traded with at Summer Berry Lake, which could be supplied by horse from the Athabasca (instead of by the longer horse haul then used to supply it from Edmonton); or a new post could be built for them near McLeod's old Athabasca post.



interior after the first year and the outfit itself could be obtained to a significant degree from posts to be abandoned. The major expense for the expedition would be the large numbers of traps required for the initial outfit, but this cost would occur only once. Large numbers of broken guns were to be found at all the posts, and Heron suggested gathering and repairing them, so that they might be used by the Company servants, or sold to the Indians. About fifty horses would be required to enable the trappers to proceed above the post on "Bull Pond River" if it was to be the furthest post inland the first season. They would also be needed to safeguard the canoes from Indian attack and to haul timber for construction. By taking fifty sheets of tin and a smith inland, the expedition could produce many of the kettles needed for the trade at the posts; while if four hundred sheets of the metal were carried, no copper kettles would be needed at all in the outfit. Since the number of kettles sold would bear directly on the amount of tallow melted by the natives, this was an important factor in the trade. Similarly, Heron suggested that iron could most economically be worked inland at the posts.

Heron's plans undoubtedly influenced Simpson, but it is very unlikely that they ever reached the London Committee which had at any rate decided to recommend the scheme before Simpson received the twelve page letter.

A letter dated London, February 27, and probably enclosed in the spring packet of 1822 from London, expressed



the approval of the Governor and Committee:

We highly approve of the plan of sending a Hunting Expedition to the Head Waters of the Missourie -- connected with the Trade of the South Branch of the Shaskatchewan [sic] (or Bow River) which has been proposed; The State of the Country at the present moment, when so many Hands (of all classes) will be unemployed -- appears peculiarly favourable for engaging in such an undertaking and for carrying the object into full effect. The adoption of it therefore for the ensuing season is recommended. We inclose a project for this object for the consideration of the Council and would recommend the number of Hunters to be increased if it can be done conveniently, as the more numerous the party is made, the safer and probably the more profitable the expedition will prove.<sup>64</sup>

A further letter from the Committee, dated March 2, recommends that a "considerable proportion" of the "stout active young men who would fall into the 4th Class of clerks" be included in the expedition as they would prove more dependable in an emergency than "common servants."<sup>65</sup> Heron's detailed plan was dated March 14, almost two weeks after these two letters were penned in England.

The importance of the Committee's two letters may not be immediately apparent, but is very real. The first contains several revealing statements. A basic point to be noticed is the emphasis on the Missouri River, an emphasis more closely resembling that of the Bird - Garry memorandum than the plans of Francis Heron, because Bird, unlike Heron, felt that no significant quantities of beaver were to be found north of the Missouri watershed. Hence we may assume

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<sup>64</sup>H. B. A., D.5/1, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 28.

<sup>65</sup>H. B. A., A.6/20, "London Correspondence Book Outwards -- H B C Official 1822 - 1824," fo. 27.



that the Committee (of which Garry was a member) had largely adopted Bidr's ideas as presented by Garry. This can be further substantiated by the fact that word from Simpson in Rupert's Land about Heron's ideas could not have reached the Committee after the freeze up of the Hudson Bay and the St. Lawrence in the fall; consequently the results of the Governor's conversations with Heron at Moose Lake, whatever they were, were as unknown to the Committee as they are to us. The "project" which was enclosed with the first letter mentioned above has been lost, but it seems reasonable to assume that because only Bird's plans (of those discovered) could have reached the London offices, the "project" was most likely an adaptation of that scheme.

Another aspect of the letters which is revealing is the mention of unemployed hands as a reason for going ahead with the endeavor. This is certainly not to imply that the Committee had only this factor in mind, but just as certainly it was of very real importance to the members. It might also be noted that the Committee recommended increasing the number of hunters. Simpson's success in this regard will be noted later.

In a letter of April 10, 1822, Simpson acknowledged Heron's plan, and assured him that the project would be laid before the next meeting of the Council.<sup>66</sup> It might also be significant that in this letter, as in Heron's letter of March 14, there is no mention of a possibility that Heron

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<sup>66</sup>H. B. A., D.4/1, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 55.



might lead or share command of the expedition. One may assume that the leaders had by this time been chosen and that Heron, who had asked for the position had been passed by, and knew it.

The Council of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land met on June 24, 1822 at Norway House for the purpose of considering the arrangements to be made with regard to the trading expedition to the South Saskatchewan. A resolution marked the official birth of the Bow River Expedition.

Resolved that a hunting Expedition be fitted out to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, and that Mr. Rowand Chief Trader be instructed to proceed with a party of Servants and Freeman, escorted by as many friendly Indians as he may conceive necessary, to meet the Brigade to be forwarded from York with the Outfits at a place to be determined upon.<sup>67</sup>

Simpson immediately wrote to inform John Rowand at Fort Edmonton of the Council's decision to form establishments on the South Branch to tap the furs of the Missouri.<sup>68</sup> Rowand was told that the plan adopted was supplied by the Committee and had undergone only small alterations at the hands of the Council. The outline of the plan was enclosed in the letter and appears to have been lost, but Simpson mentioned the matters which required Rowand's immediate attention in the body of the letter, and they serve to give us an idea of the scope of the plan.

The Edmonton trader was to take immediate measures to

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<sup>67</sup>Fleming, Minutes of Council, p. 12n.

<sup>68</sup>H. B. A., D.4/1, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 55.



collect as "many Halfbreeds, Freeman and others . . . to be employed as hunters in the Missouri."<sup>69</sup> A party of officers and men would be required to accompany the hunters, and Simpson recommended that the outpost at Dog Rump Creek<sup>70</sup> be abandoned so that the men employed there would be freed for the expedition. These were to be supplemented by Anthony Fiestel and nine men from Edmonton, three or four men from Rocky Mountain House, J. E. Harriott and Hugh Monro from Carlton House, and Donald Manson and Alexander Douglas, who were to be sent to Carlton to join the brigade. Simpson proposed that this group of seven officers and twenty men,<sup>71</sup> together with the hunters should join the main party to be fitted out at York Factory in either of two ways.

The first method for accomplishing the rendezvous which Simpson suggested was that of following the Rocky Mountains to the Bow River, waiting there for the water party. If this course of action was pursued one or two men and a party of Piegans would have to be sent down the Bow to the junction with the Red Deer to meet the boats and conduct them towards the mountains. The alternate course of action set forth by the Governor was for the whole inland group to travel to the mouth of the South Saskatchewan

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Dog Rump Creek was an outpost of Fort Edmonton located to the east of that establishment.

<sup>71</sup>H. B. A., D.4/1, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 55.



and wait for the brigade, then to travel with it upstream. Simpson stated that whichever course was chosen, eight or ten horses should be sent to Carlton for the use of the brigade, to be expected there from September 1 to 5.

Other details in the letter include the direction to guarantee beaver prices for the hunters and to supply them with steel traps (which were apparently in short supply at York Factory) and supplies if they came overland by the mountain route. Simpson also asked the trader for his opinion of the idea ". . . that the Beaver Hill Crees and the Sussees might, if we had Settlements near the Missouri, be induced to join the pegans and Hunt Beaver in that Country."<sup>72</sup>

Some time during June, Colin Robertson wrote to a friend in regard to the Expedition which he had refused to command.<sup>73</sup> He feared, said Robertson, that the leaders appointed to the Expedition (McKenzie and Rowand) would not be able to work together, and would end by accusing one another. He also wondered about the reliability of the Indian reports about the wealth of the Bow River District:

. . . We are going upon Indian Report alone, and those acquainted with the Slave nations, will admit that no Indians are so much given to exaggeration as the Blackfeet and Piegon tribes.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Rich, ed., Robertson's Letters, p. 190. Rich dates the letter as June, and says that it was written to John McLoughlin. In the copy book, the letter is unaddressed and undated. (H. B. A., E.10/2, "Colin Robertson's Correspondence Books 1814 - 1822," fo. 224.)

<sup>74</sup>Rich, ed., Robertson's Letters, p. 190.



The Expedition, which was too far advanced to be cancelled, Robertson thought, could have no better leader than McKenzie.

The final plans for the Expedition were laid at a meeting of the Council of the Northern Department held at York Factory on July 8. Unlike the previous meeting of June 24, this one dealt with the entire department, but a large proportion of its resolutions were related to the Bow River Expedition.

By resolutions thirty-one and thirty-two Donald McKenzie was appointed as Chief Factor and John Rowand as Chief Trader for the South Branch of the Saskatchewan.<sup>75</sup> McKenzie's commission was significantly not to the joint leadership with Rowand that had worried Colin Robertson earlier.

The thirty-seventh resolution provided that eighty engaged men, exclusive of officers, be appointed to the South Saskatchewan, and that an outfit of not more than two hundred and fifty pieces be transported to the district by four boats and six canoes.<sup>76</sup> The next resolution directed McKenzie to prepare an indefinite number of buffalo tongues for the London market, along with all the tallow and country provisions that could be brought out.<sup>77</sup>

Resolution thirty-nine of the Council granted McKenzie the authority ". . . to use his own discretion in regard to the different Establishments to be formed and all other matters connected with the trade. . . ."<sup>78</sup> He was also to send

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<sup>75</sup>Fleming, Minutes of Council, p. 16.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



dispatches to Carlton as soon after the ice set as possible ". . . stating his prospects and future views of the Trade; also his Indent for men and goods for next year."<sup>79</sup>

The fifty fifth resolution gave Simpson the power to abandon the North Saskatchewan in the spring if McKenzie's reports proved favorable; and to make whatever changes in the department he felt expedient if the North Branch was maintained.<sup>80</sup>

The final resolution dealing with the Bow River Expedition was the sixty fifth. This directed McKenzie to procure a thousand buffalo hides and as many one year bld calf skins as possible for the Buffalo Wool Company.<sup>81</sup> The last official touches had been applied to the plan.

With the Bow River Expedition finally a reality, it remained for the Governor to report his progress in the final stages of planning to the London Committee. His letter of July 16 to the Committee contains many hints of the plan laid for the expedition at the Council meetings and presumably between the Governor and McKenzie.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 19 - 20.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 21. The Buffalo Wool Company was an idea of Lord Selkirk's, and was organized just before his death, with capital from well to do officers of the Company. The plan was to buy buffalo hides, tan them, and weave the coarse wool into blankets for the inland trade, and export the fine inner wool to England. The scheme failed because of high costs for hides and labor, and lack of demand for the fine wool in England, making the cost of the finished goods for the fur trade prohibitive. (Morton, History, pp. 662 - 663.)

<sup>82</sup>Fleming, Minutes of Council, pp. 339 - 341.



The Expedition, which was preparing to depart, was to consist of Donald McKenzie, John Rowand, twelve "young gentlemen," and eighty engaged servants, Simpson reported. The number of engaged servants had been increased because, owing to the short notice given Rowand, the Governor felt it unlikely that the numbers of freemen and hunters desired could be obtained from the North Saskatchewan district. Simpson added, however, that if Donald McKenzie were to report favorably about the prospects of the new posting, a considerable number of hunters would be assembled for the next season. On the subject of the North Saskatchewan, Governor Simpson told the London Committee that for safety reasons the establishments there could not be reduced, but that if the South Branch was successful, the area would be completely abandoned. This decision would be made, Simpson said, during the winter tour he planned through the Athabasca area;<sup>83</sup> he expected to receive an express from McKenzie while at Edmonton. If the region was to be abandoned, in a few seasons it should recover sufficiently to be used for trade once more. No decision would be made, the Governor assured his readers, until he was well informed on the subject.

Another letter, marked in the copy book "Duplicate

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<sup>83</sup>". . . I have determined on proceeding on a Tour immediately after the Ice takes by Isle a la Crosse, Athabasca, Peace River and Lesser Slave Lake and expect to reach Edmonton in March so as to receive a communication from Mr. McKenzie. . . . " (Ibid., pp. 356 - 357.)



Answer to the Letter 27 Feb 1822,"<sup>84</sup> while reflecting much the same ideas as the letter above, is far more specific in dealing with the plans for the Expedition. The letter, dated July 31, gives details of Rowand's instructions of June 24 and mentions the unlikelihood of enough trappers being secured. As unity of design was very important, McKenzie had been given sole command of the Expedition and was authorized to act on his own discretion.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Simpson devoted some space to inform the Committee of McKenzie's plans.

He intends proceeding with his whole party to the Forks of the Red Deer River where he will remain a few Days to set up Stockades and build a House to lodge the property in security: at this post he will leave the most considerable part of his Outfit with about forty men (including Officers) under the charge of a proper person. With the remainder of the Goods and party he means to proceed up the Bow River to the Borders of the Mountain, and there, or in a more Southerly situation if found to be preferable, build a Fort which will be considered the Depot for Hunters, whence their operations must commence and in which the produce of their hunts after the departure of the Boats in the Spring and before their return in the fall must be Stored. At this Post a Trade is to be carried on with the Muddy River Indians who it is supposed will kill a considerable number of Beaver; indeed little more as returns can be expected this Season than the produce of their hunts, but it is hoped that Mr. McKenzie will be

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<sup>84</sup>H. B. A., D.4/85, "Simpson's Official Reports - 1822," fo. 19.

<sup>85</sup>This and other references (cf. Robertson's letter of June, 1822 mentioned supra, p. 73) may indicate that the plan sent by the Committee had specified a dual leadership. Simpson's language is very persuasive, as if he were attempting to justify a change in the official plan:

"The undertaking is generally considered to be rather of a hazardous nature, the Gentlemen of the Council as well as myself are therefore of the opinion that unity of design and action are most essential to its success . . . ." (Fleming, Minutes of Council, p. 356.)



able to ascertain satisfactorily whether the country is as rich in Beaver as represented and whether it will be practicable to Introduce a considerable body of Hunters to kill them with safety and advantage.

In the event of his meeting with a favorable reception and that it is found an object to prosecute this Trade he entertains sanguine hopes of being enabled to open a communication with the Snake Indians of the Columbia and drain the valuable track of country they occupy of it's [sic] Riches; he has great influence with Those Tribes and if the design is practicable no one is better qualified to carry it into effect.<sup>86</sup>

Simpson briefly mentioned how the North Branch could be abandoned at the end of the letter, a plan remarkably similar to that suggested to him by Francis Heron in the letter of March 14. If the posts on the North Saskatchewan were to be vacated, the Governor wrote,

. . . a post will be fitted out from Lesser Slave Lake at the Pambina Portage or the Hunter's Lodge upon the Athabasca River for the purpose of supplying the Thick Wood Stone Indians and Crees and the Establishment of Carlton will be removed across the Isthmus to the South Branch House in order to keep up and strengthen the line of communication.<sup>87</sup>

In view of the variety of pans and the inadequacy of the documentation, it is difficult to attribute the concept of the Bow River Expedition to any particular source or sources. One can only look, in general terms, at those involved. Both Bird and Heron seem to have had an influence on the plan. Bird's sway seems to have been strongest during the initial stages of the planning, when the Bow River Exped-

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 357. The Hudson's Bay Company's South Branch House was destroyed in 1794 by Gros Ventres, and the nearby North West Company post was hastily abandoned the same year. The posts were located about ninety miles north of present day Saskatoon, and were replaced in 1794 by Carlton on the North Branch. (Morton, History, pp. 444, 457.)



ition was just a dream, while Heron's effect on the development of the plan came later through his conversations with and letters to Simpson, who implemented the plan. One thing is certain. The plan was not that of George Simpson's errant judgement,<sup>88</sup> and if blame for the failure of the Expedition up the South Saskatchewan in 1822 must be assigned, it belongs as much to the two former North Saskatchewan traders who recommended the scheme to Garry and Simpson. To blame Simpson alone for the failure of the Expedition is as unfair as to completely omit mention of those with whom he took council. His error was not as much in initiating the undertaking as in following the advice of Heron and Bird.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 695. "Governor Simpson's judgement, more especially in the first years, before he became fully acquainted with the country, was not in-errant. His plan to abandon the posts of the Saskatchewan in favor of the south branch. . . was defeated by the physical features of the country. . . ."





Map 1.---Detail from Arrowsmith's 1834 Map





Map 2.--A Contemporary View  
of the Region Around Chesterfield House

Scale: 1 inch = 100 miles



## CHAPTER IV

### Bow River Expedition - Implementation

The Bow River Expedition departed from York Factory on July 21, 1822. It consisted of six boats and a light canoe carrying three clerks and eighty-one men.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the brigade, including John Rowand and the clerks, interpreters, hunters and engaged men assigned to the Expedition from the North Saskatchewan, were to join enroute. Donald McKenzie, his son Donald McKenzie Jr.,<sup>2</sup> James Sutherland<sup>3</sup> and nine men followed the next day in the canoe, leaving the slower boats, under the charge of P. C. Pambrun, to get a head start in their laborious upstream journey.

The only recorded death on the entire Expedition, despite contrary references in the secondary accounts,<sup>4</sup> seems to have occurred shortly after the departure of the

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<sup>1</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Journal of Occurrences, Bow River Expedition," fo. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Donald McKenzie Jr. was a clerk and the journal keeper on the Bow River Expedition.

<sup>3</sup>James Sutherland was Chief Factor in charge of the Saskatchewan District from 1821 to 1823, and had evidently undertaken to travel inland with McKenzie in the light canoe in 1822. (Rich, Simpson's Athabasca Journal, pp. 469 - 470.)

<sup>4</sup>Masson, Bourgeois, p. 31n. "Chesterfield House was re-established in 1822 . . . but had to be abandoned a few years afterwards on account of the unfriendly dispositions of the Natives; who murdered several of the traders."



light canoe. One of the men, Joseph Roi, suffered severe pains and appeared lifeless after drinking river water on July 22. McKenzie placed the stricken voyageur on a passing outbound canoe for a return trip to York, but the unfortunate man died soon afterwards.<sup>5</sup>

The canoe was able to overtake the boats at Rock Portage on July 25, where the men had stopped to make oars and robes. McKenzie and Sutherland proceeded on in the canoe for Norway House, while McKenzie Jr. remained with the slower boats. The progress of the brigade appears to have been steady and uneventful, with boat damage on July 29 and 30 slowing progress, until Oxford House was reached at noon, August 12. Here the little flotilla found a note from McKenzie and before proceeding procured ten "pemmicans" to replace some provisions damaged at the same time as the boat.

Donald McKenzie reached Norway House by August 7, for on that day he wrote Simpson to report on the progress of his charge, a letter which indicates that he was not overly optimistic about the prospects for a successful winter. He requested that the broken boat, because it was five years old, not be charged to the Expedition. Keenly disappointed that he had not received traps from Fort William, McKenzie

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<sup>5</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Chesterfield House (Bow River) - Account Book 1822 - 1823," fo. 28. Listing 95 reads: "Jos. Roi . . . died on Passage on leaving YF 21/July/22." The journal entry for September 29 remarks that "Jos. Roi" had died in passage. (H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 11.



ventured a touch of sarcasm. His was ". . . a trapping expedition on foot with no traps aboard; I wonder who ever heard the like."<sup>6</sup> He might as well have gone without oars, the Chief Factor wrote, as expect success at that rate; but he was careful not to blame Simpson.

McKenzie was clearly worried that he would be unable to do justice to the intentions of the Committee and Council. ". . . how can you decide on giving up the Saskatchewan unless this undertaking meets with something of a fair trial."<sup>7</sup> He was concerned that the country, never before encountered, must be occupied late in the season by men ignorant of the languages of the natives. He did not intend to "throw cold water on the affair,"<sup>8</sup> but felt that the Governor should warn the London Committee not to expect large returns of beaver from the first year's trading. The succeeding campaign would need more traps and hunters, although additional hunters need not wait, but could be dispatched in the spring. Finally, he recommended that the Expedition leave York earlier in 1823 (by July 1), as it would likely return to York from the South Branch by June 20.

McKenzie sent a new boat from Norway House to replace the damaged one, and on August 15 the brigade (then at Whitefalls Portage) received it and a supply of pemmican from their leader. By August 15 the main party reached Norway House, but McKenzie had by this time gone on to

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<sup>6</sup>H. B. A., D.4/116, "Simpson Inwards," no. 83.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



Cumberland House, leaving written instructions directing the brigade to repair and fit three canoes to take thirty of the pieces being carried for the Saskatchewan Department. Additional trading goods and country provisions to the value of £253 were loaded,<sup>9</sup> consisting of, among other things, 108 gallons of rum and 2380 pounds of pemmican.<sup>10</sup>

The main brigade left Norway House on August 16, while McKenzie Jr. and the canoes departed on the following day, catching up to the boats on the 20th. A canoe from Cumberland was passed on August 25, and the brigade learned that their leader had left that post five days earlier for Carlton, and would meet the brigade at the "Falls of the S. Branch."<sup>11</sup> The younger McKenzie and the canoes arrived at Cumberland House on August 27, Pambrun and the boats the next day. Because Heron, in charge at Cumberland for the summer, refused to turn over any secondhand supplies to the brigade until James Leith, the chief trader at Cumberland<sup>12</sup> arrived, the brigade was delayed for a day. Meanwhile, goods carried by the Expedition for Cumberland and the Saskatchewan Department were unloaded, and on August 30, after the ar-

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<sup>9</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., fos. 8 - 9. Other provisions bought here included 10 buffalo tongues, 28 pounds of dried meat, 46  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds of fat, 17 bushels of salt, 40  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of maple syrup, and 35  $\frac{1}{6}$  bushels of Indian corn.

<sup>11</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Rich, Simpson's Athabasca Journal, p. 446. Leith was in charge at Cumberland from 1822 to 1829.



rival of Leith and the purchase of goods, the boats embarked, followed the next day by the faster canoes.

At Cumberland, goods to the value of £257<sup>13</sup> were purchased, consisting, as had those from Norway House, of both trading goods and provisions (the Expedition bought 3600 pounds of pemmican this time), as well as a considerable amount of secondhand items.<sup>14</sup> The slower moving York boats were overtaken by McKenzie Jr. by September 2; and on the 6th the brigade, preceded by the canoes, arrived at the forks of the Saskatchewan, and the first leg of the journey was complete.

Donald McKenzie, travelling in the light canoe, had reached Carlton House on August 27, and spent several days there ordering supplies and supervising their packing. On August 30 he departed from the post to travel downstream to the forks to await his brigade.<sup>15</sup> While McKenzie waited, Rowand, Fisher, Manson, and Douglas arrived at Carlton from Edmonton in a canoe and a small boat with eight men; and the following day Douglas and one of the men were dispatched to the forks with letters from Rowand to McKenzie, which they delivered at the forks just after the brigade arrived. Rowand, in his letter to McKenzie, apparently promised to

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<sup>13</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 30.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., fos. 10 - 12. The provisions taken on consisted of 4 bushels of barley, 600 pounds of dried meat, 40 pounds of fat, 3600 pounds of pemmican, and 5 bushels of country made salt.

<sup>15</sup>H. B. A., B.27/a/12, "Carlton House (Saskatchewan) Post Journal 1822 - 1823," fo. 12.



join the brigade on September 10 at the beginning of the portage from the South Saskatchewan to Carlton House; so the boats and canoes set off up the South Branch. McKenzie, before leaving to proceed up the South Saskatchewan, dispatched an express to Rowand at Carlton to be carried overland by two men. No sooner had the Chief Factor embarked ahead of the main party as had been his practise, than the express carriers returned, having become lost on their errand.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, on September 5, four tents of freemen arrived at Carlton, followed later that day by Harriott and Bird<sup>17</sup> leading seven men and two Indians with the horses from Edmonton for the Bow River Expedition. On the next day, Peter Brass, sent on August 30 across the portage from Carlton to await the brigade, returned to report that it had not arrived yet.

September 9 saw the Expedition reach the portage rendezvous but McKenzie had mistaken the site and had gone further upstream. The first discrepancy between the Bow River Expedition's journal and that of Carlton House is observed at this point when the Expedition's journal noted the arrival of Rowand and his party at the portage rendezvous on September 9,<sup>18</sup> while the Carlton journal records

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<sup>16</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 7.

<sup>17</sup>There was no Bird on the Expedition, according to the account book role. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 25 - 29.) This was likely one of James Bird's half breed sons, perhaps George, a clerk in the Saskatchewan District at the time. (Fleming, Minutes of Council, p. 428.)

<sup>18</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 7.



the departure of Rowand and his group with baggage and three canoes to be carried overland by horses to the rendezvous on September 10.<sup>19</sup>

According to the Expedition log, Rowand went upstream in search of McKenzie on September 10, and the two leaders returned together that evening.<sup>20</sup> The brigade remained at the portage, waiting to make arrangements to hire freemen. A group of these made an appearance on the 11th, but McKenzie refused to engage them.<sup>21</sup> On September 12, the brigade, according to McKenzie Jr., departed upstream;<sup>22</sup> but the Carlton journal that day recorded the arrival of letters carried from the Expedition by Manson and Harriott. According to the journalist at Carlton, its master J. P. Pruden, these two men left Carlton on the 13th for their return to the Expedition with letters and a load of barley.<sup>23</sup>

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Rowand's party consisted of Edward Harriott and Donald Manson, clerks; Henry Fisher, an apprentice clerk; Jos. and Robert la Framboise, A. Duplessis, Michelle Bourassa, and Maurice Piccard, hunters; Joseph Roque and Charles Mackay, interpreters; Jacque Berger, a freeman; and August Valle, Louis Berrard, Peter Brass, Hugh Fraser, Francois Lucier, August Lavalley, and Ant. Lamarr, all enlisted servants.

<sup>19</sup>H. B. A., B.27/a/12, "Carlton Journal," fo. 13.

<sup>20</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 7.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. No reason for this strange behavior is given in the journal.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>H. B. A., B.27/a/12, "Carlton Journal," fo. 13. One must assume that there is at least a one day error in one of the two journals, although it would be difficult to say which.



During his stay at Carlton, McKenzie was apparently unable to secure any freemen from that area as trappers for the Expedition. An entry in the Carlton journal, dated August 25 (before the arrival of McKenzie) sheds light on this reluctance to join his party:

. . . All the freemen have refused to accompany the South Branch Expedition on account of having large families which they do not wish to leave behind & the service being too dangerous to permit them to carry them up the Branch. The freemen were requested before they went off to be at the Fort about the time the expedition is expected to pass opposite here as the encouragements which the conductors of the expedition might hold out to them may induce some of them to alter their resolutions.<sup>24</sup>

McKenzie seems to have been unable to change their minds.

John Rowand had been requested, in a letter from Simpson dated June 24, to gather all the freemen he could from the Edmonton area, but he had been as unsuccessful as McKenzie was to be later that year. While he was at Carlton, on September 9, Rowand wrote Simpson to explain his failure, and to outline the changes which he had made in the Governor's orders for arranging the trade of the North Saskatchewan for the ensuing season.<sup>25</sup> His orders had arrived so late, Rowand wrote, that most of the freemen were beyond reach, for having been given debts in the spring, they had spread out to hunt, and many were across the mountains or in the upper Bow River region. If the report that he had heard from Pruden at Carlton that McKenzie would ac-

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., fos. 11 - 12.

<sup>25</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," no. 3.



cept only single men for the Expedition was true, Rowand speculated, there were not likely to be any eligible men in the entire department. Why a family, as long as it did not live within the fort, should disqualify a hunter, Rowand could not understand.

Rowand had been ordered to bring nine men from Edmonton, four from Rocky Mountain House, and the entire staff of Dog Rump Creek, but had decided that this would prove to be not only dangerous but impractical. The loss of nine men from Edmonton would leave the post "too bare," and Simpson's choice of "Old Flett" to run the post was changed in favor of a McDonald. Rowand chose not to close the profitable Dog Rump Creek post, at least until fall, and left four of the six man staff there. These four, he explained to Simpson, were married and therefore not eligible for the Expedition anyway. Rowand felt that he could have recruited more freemen had the time been available, but hoped that McKenzie might be able to enlist some of those who he said were waiting expectantly at Carlton. Finally, he had sent

. . . one John Welsh a Slave Indian Interpreter up to the Mountain & he is to come and find us at the Forks . . . and bring with him all the Piegiens he will find & freemen if he sees any.<sup>26</sup>

Rowand's three page letter contains several apologies for his lack of success in recruiting hunters, and the hope that if the mission were to fail, the blame would not rest on him.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



According to the journal of the Expedition, the brigade embarked from the portage to Carlton on the morning of September 12, for the last portion of the journey up the South Branch. That day the hunters, interpreters, and some of the young gentlemen rode out to kill buffalo, the first of many such food gathering sorties. Their luck seems to have been very good, for the next day the boats put ashore to load the party's kill of six. That day, while the boats waited for Harriott to return from Carlton, the men were issued muskets and ammunition. Musketoons were fastened to the bows of the boats, in case the Expedition should be attacked by the Stone (Assiniboine) Indians who might resent the traders headed for the lands of their enemies, the Slave tribes.<sup>27</sup>

Assiniboines stole two of the party's horses on September 13, and on the 14th the hunters returned just after setting out for the day, having seen nearby a camp of two hundred tents of apparently hostile Assiniboines. La Rocque, the Stone interpreter, was sent to the camp, and returned with several of the chiefs, who spent the night with the brigade. A volley of musket fire greeted the traders the next day on their arrival at the Assiniboine camp, and after La Rocque's long speech, each Indian was given a small piece of tobacco and a glass of rum. Following some trading for rum and tobacco, the boats resumed

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<sup>27</sup>The Expedition carried at least seven "musketoons" as well as seven heavier guns, such as a brass three pounder with carriage and a cast metal three pounder. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 17.)



their travel, having easily overcome their first potential obstacle. The Assiniboine camp, which La Rocque reported consisted of five or six hundred men (some of whom had just returned from a war party to the Missouri where thirteen or fourteen of their number had been killed) could have proven very difficult to pass had the natives been unwilling to agree to be outflanked by the traders.

Many entries in the journal for the trip up the South Saskatchewan deal with the large numbers of animals killed to feed the men. Eight buffalo were killed on the 16th; two more with two red deer on the 17th; ten buffalo on the 19th; and four, along with a buck red deer, on the 20th. Other animals were seen, but the most heartening sight of all was two beaver lodges spotted on the 18th and four more which appeared on September 20.

The trip was not without accidents. On September 20 Hugh Monro fell from and was kicked by his horse, apparently near or in the river, as he was rescued from drowning by Henry Fisher. The first aid administered to the unfortunate man, the younger McKenzie wrote, was a good bleeding, carried out by Pambrun, and the greatest concern expressed by the journalist seemed to have been over the loss of a double barrelled gun.<sup>28</sup> Two days later, Fisher received a concussion when his musket burst, but apparently no serious harm was done as the episode was not mentioned again.

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<sup>28</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 9.



Frequent entries in the journal referred to the sparse vegetation along the banks of the river, bare except for ". . . straggling aged clumps of rough poplar,"<sup>29</sup> although an abundance of buffalo was a consolation to the party.

The first Blackfeet were encountered on September 26, when a hunter came upon a camp of seven tents, which Rowand and an interpreter rode out to visit. They brought the principal members of the group back to the boats, where they were given tobacco, but significantly, no rum.

An important entry was made in the journal on September 27:

Weather fine and mild embarked early this morning and came up with encampments of Natives at every point, debarked at 4 P. M. on a firm level point well wooded in short it is the only good wood I have observed since we passed the Moose Woods and the natives confirm it is the only fit place for building on the River it is about a league from the Forks of the Bow and Red Deer Rivers.<sup>30</sup>

McKenzie decided to build a post on the spot, after Rowand and Heron had ridden up to the forks the next day and found ". . . the wood far inferior to where we are encamped."<sup>31</sup>

Donald McKenzie told the Indians that;

. . . his intentions were to have proceeded much further for beaver for which he came amongst them but as they were so wishful for an establishment in the center of their lands he expected they would behave better to the whites than they had done to his predecessors who came here amongst them many years ago.<sup>32</sup>

If a connection between the Bow River Expedition and the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., September 21.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., fo. 10, September 27.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., September 28.      <sup>32</sup>Ibid.



Chesterfield Houses is to be established, surely no more conclusive evidence is to be found than this remark made on the arrival of the Expedition at the site of the old post. McKenzie indisputably knew of earlier efforts in the region and this entry helps confirm a belief in the relationship between the several efforts. The entry also raises the unanswered question of why McKenzie chose to stop when he did, rather than pressing further upstream, a question for which the answer may never be known.



## CHAPTER V

### Bow River Expedition

#### A Winter on the Plains

The Bow River Expedition passed a full winter on the prairies, a winter so eventful that in the spring McKenzie was to recommend the location be permanently abandoned. While the major source of information about the post, the journal kept by Donald McKenzie Jr., deals with the season in a chronological fashion, it was decided for reasons of simplicity and clarity to subdivide this account into the more important topics and discuss each individually. This approach may have destroyed the continuity which the journal maintained by its very nature, but allowed for a certain amount of discussion of these topics, discussion which seemed to be more important than a chronological sequence. The construction and shape of the post, the exploratory journeys, the operation of the trade, the natives, and the preparations for departure were chosen as the basic, if vague, topics to be considered.

McKenzie, after he had decided to build on a spot about four miles below the forks on the north side of the South Saskatchewan,<sup>1</sup> had leather tents erected, with those

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<sup>1</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 10. The entry for September 29 says that the spot selected for the



for the goods encircled by the men's tents. On September 29, the men were supplied with hatchets to handle and sharpen so that building might be begun,<sup>2</sup> while on the following day they were at work cutting pickets and erecting a temporary trading shop and provisions store from the local poplar, which because of its large size and crookedness, as well as its scarcity, was less than adequate.<sup>3</sup>

Poor as the materials were, by October 6 enough pickets had been cut to begin stockades.<sup>4</sup> Gathering chimney stones and the laborious job of squaring the crooked timber for buildings occupied the men the next day.<sup>5</sup> Work progressed well, as might be expected with nearly a hundred men almost wholly engaged in construction, and by the 9th the trading tents could be moved to the center of the as yet uncompleted palisades.<sup>6</sup> Two days later the hanging of the gates completed the very first stage, although the pickets were

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post was "4 miles below the forks." (Ibid., fo. 13.) The entry of October 14 states that when Harriott, Manson, Sinclair et al left on their exploratory journey south to the Missouri, they crossed the river and camped to wait for McKenzie to join them. Therefore, we may assume that the post was on the north bank of the river. The positioning of the post below the forks is further supported by the entry in the journal on September 27, and one made on September 28 which states in part ". . . Rowand and Heron rode up to the Forks this forenoon but found the wood far inferior for building to where we are encamped." (Ibid., fo. 10.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., fo. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., fo. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



so crooked that the palisade had to be interlined with short pieces of wood. Even so, the journalist doubted that the defenses would be serviceable until the bastions were erected. Meanwhile, the two blacksmiths with the Expedition were busy making a bellows and preparing charcoal, while two men sawed,<sup>7</sup> two made soap, and some other servants squared wood for the bastions and inner buildings.<sup>8</sup>

The palisades were obviously far from perfect, for on October 13th a group of Indians threatened to shoot through them at the "White Dogs,"<sup>9</sup> and the next day a thirsty native scaled the walls in search of rum.<sup>10</sup> Sixty-one pieces of the most valuable goods -- rum, tobacco, and ammunition -- were stored in a temporary cellar dug on October 16.<sup>11</sup> Further cellars were dug under the tents the next day to accommodate fifty more pieces, the blacksmiths completed a forge, and one of the bastions was begun.<sup>12</sup> On October 18, the men were occupied building the two bastions and in felling, sawing, and squaring wood.<sup>13</sup> The outside work on the bastions was completed the following day.

The bastions were twenty-one feet high, thirteen feet square, and musket proof. Though they had floors,<sup>14</sup> the

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<sup>7</sup>Although no mention is made of it to this point, it is likely that a pitsaw was in operation.  
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<sup>8</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 12.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., fo. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., fo. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., fo. 15.



Expedition did not have enough saws (and only three pitsaw files to sharpen them), so the bastions were of necessity roofed with leather temporarily to save the saws for cutting flooring for other buildings and boards for the bateau that would be built in the spring.<sup>15</sup>

P. C. Pambrun, in charge of the construction, found his greatest difficulty to be the pilfering of tools by the natives. His men busied themselves building a forge, Indian house and trading shop, and digging a cellar in the north bastion, one of the floors of which was to be used as a temporary storehouse.<sup>16</sup> The following day, October 23, the extra goods were stored in the south bastion (some overflow went to the northern one) and the ammunition, rum and tobacco were removed from the temporary cellar and placed in the new one in the north bastion.<sup>17</sup>

By November 2, the blacksmiths' and cooper's shop was finished,<sup>18</sup> and the younger McKenzie remarked that the Indian house and trading shop were nearing completion.<sup>19</sup> The November 23 journal entry noted that the interpreter's house was being converted into a mess room and a residence for John Rowand.<sup>20</sup> On November 15 the store, twenty-four

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>According to the account books, two blacksmiths, Pierre Dugardin and A Lamarr (dit Cote); and one cooper, William Wilson, accompanied the Expedition. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 25 - 28.)

<sup>19</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 17.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., fo. 21.



feet by twelve feet, was begun, although progress was slowed by the depth of snow.<sup>21</sup> By November 30 it was being roofed,<sup>22</sup> and the task was completed and the building plastered on December 10.<sup>23</sup>

By December 21 the days were so cold and short that construction had come to a standstill, with the men engaged almost entirely in cutting wood to heat not only the buildings but the leather tents in which all the men were still housed.<sup>24</sup> Presumably the new store was being put to use by the end of the year when goods were moved from the bastion.<sup>25</sup>

January 6 saw the decision to convert the blacksmiths' and cooper's shops into dwellings for the gentlemen, as the season was too advanced for building a dwelling house. Temporary workshops were to be erected for the craftsmen in the trading shop.<sup>26</sup> The entry for the following day is puzzling. The men were engaged that day in erecting chimneys and a small house for Heron, as well as building an apartment for "the interpreter" (although there were at least four men classed as interpreters with the Expedition<sup>27</sup>) whose house had been taken over by Rowand after November 23.<sup>28</sup> Exactly when the interpreter's house had been built is not stated, nor is the reason for McKenzie remaining in a tent while

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., fo. 20.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., fo. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., fo. 24.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., fo. 25.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., fo. 26.

<sup>27</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 25 - 28. The four listed are Roque, Welsh, Taylor, and Whiteway.

<sup>28</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fos. 21, 26.



Heron got a house, unless it is based on the fact that Heron had a woman and two children, while according to the account book, McKenzie had only two children.<sup>29</sup>

Only after all the other gentlemen had been accommodated in houses, a small building for McKenzie ". . . still in a Leather Tent,"<sup>30</sup> was begun and was completed by February 5. Two other structures appeared for the first time that month in the journal, an icehouse and a temporary shed. The shed, apparently erected in the fall for grease and provisions, was occupied late in January by the dispossessed tradesmen.<sup>31</sup> The icehouse, presumably under the new storehouse, was stocked with ice and about four hundred "joints" of meat on February 5, indicating its considerable size.<sup>32</sup> One other interesting reference concerning the construction of the post appears in the journal. On March 8 "some daring villains" scaled the walls and attempted to break into the trading shop, managing to cut the parchment windows but being thwarted from entering by the shutters.<sup>33</sup> Whether all the windows in the post were covered in this manner is a matter of conjecture.

An attempt to describe the features of the post is bound, by the vagueness inherent in the journal, to introduce error. However, some details are known. The post was

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<sup>29</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Report on Districts." This was written by Francis Heron.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., fo. 27.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., fo. 31.



very likely square or rectangular, enclosed by a poplar palisade. Two gates are mentioned, although the main gate appears to have been most often used.<sup>34</sup> This was likely rather heavy and hung with iron hinges. The palisade was strengthened by two bastions twenty-one feet high, twelve feet square. The north bastion was fitted with a cellar, while both evidently had three floors,<sup>35</sup> and were roofed with leather. Inside the perimeter of the palisades was an Indian house, trading shop, a store (twenty-four feet by twelve feet with an icehouse underneath), and a temporary storage shed (later a shop for the blacksmiths and cooper). Several residences were constructed within the compound as well; the officer's residence was created from the blacksmiths' and cooper's shop; while Heron, Rowand, an interpreter and McKenzie all had residences of their own. The engaged men were housed in leather tents within the walls.

Construction was not the only concern of the Expedition, sent as it was to evaluate the potential of an immense region. The Bow River Expedition made three major exploratory trips as well as a number of shorter journeys into the hinterland during the winter. These played a large part in the eventual decision to abandon as unproductive the entire project of opening the South Saskatchewan and from it the Missouri.

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<sup>34</sup>A "back gate" is mentioned on November 8. (Ibid., fo. 18.)

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., fo. 15. One of the upper stories of the north bastion was to be used as a temporary store. This suggests that there was more than one upper storey, a conclusion supported by the height of 21 feet.



The party laid plans and began preparations for the first venture away from the new post almost immediately after its arrival.<sup>36</sup> Rowand purchased, for rum, a number of Indian horses on October 12, while others prepared leather shoes, trousers, traps, hatchets, and chissels.<sup>37</sup> On October 14 Harriott, Manson, Sinclair, Monro, Douglas, forty engaged men, the interpreter Welsh, and the hunters left the fort, crossed the river and encamped to await McKenzie and the Indian guides who were to follow the next day.<sup>38</sup>

Before leaving to join the remainder of his party, McKenzie summoned the chiefs of the nearby tribes<sup>39</sup> to the fort so that he might explain his journey and assure his audience that the trip was for exploration and not intended to assist their enemies or the Americans. He planned to check their reports of quantities of beaver near the Missouri which had enriched the Crow, Flathead, and Snake Indians who traded with the Americans or the whites across the mountains. The trader promised the chiefs that if he found their reports to be true, he would build an additional post up the Bow, Belly, or Red Deer so they might take advantage of the furs hitherto trapped by their enemies and asked for four or five men from the various tribes to serve as guides. On October

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., fo. 12. On October 10 the journal says that McKenzie was preparing for ". . . a voyage of discovery to the environs of the Missouri." to leave in four or five days.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., fo. 13.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. About four hundred Indians were camped nearby at the time.



16, saluted by three rounds from the three pounder, McKenzie and the native guides set out to join the rest of the party.<sup>40</sup>

That McKenzie's journey was not destined to succeed was first suggested by a note Rowand received from him on October 18. All the Indian guides, except a Piegan chief, had deserted because of their fear of the Crows.<sup>41</sup> On October 24 Harriott and Welsh arrived at the post to announce that the whole party had turned back when a camp of eight hundred tents of Fall Indians refused to let the party pass, asserting that they had seen McKenzie assisting their enemies across the mountains and that he was returning to join them. So hostile were the Indians that one of the chiefs would not even accept any tobacco to smoke, prompting McKenzie to remark that he had never met with greater insult from Indians, even though he was with the first whites in the Columbia in 1812, while still working for John Jacob Astor.<sup>42</sup>

Undaunted, the leaders laid plans for an expedition along the Bow and Belly Rivers to find the limits of navigation, see where wood was available, and search for the abundance of beaver the Indians reported. On October 25 Heron was ordered to prepare the party.<sup>43</sup> Two days later, Heron, Harriott, Manson, Monro, Douglas, and twenty men were ready to depart, waiting only for the arrival of a Fall Indian chief whom the interpreter McKay had sent for

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., fos. 13 - 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., fos. 15 - 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., fo. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., fo. 16.



to act as security for the endeavor. The chief, an old man named the Flesh eater, appeared but because of his age refused to go with Heron. A young man accompanying the chief was however induced by a gift of arms and a powder horn to travel with the traders.<sup>45</sup> The party finally departed on October 30 on horseback.<sup>46</sup>

After travelling upwards of five hundred miles, Heron's party returned to the forks on November 16, having examined the Bow and Red Deer Rivers for beaver, and the Bow for wood suitable for building if conditions were to warrant such a move. The exploratory group had first travelled one hundred and ten miles up the Red Deer River, which they reported as flowing south east and navigable only by a light canoe at the time of their passage. Beaver and other animals were almost completely absent. Crossing the height of land, the party reached the Bow ". . . and proceeded up along that River, a considerable distance until they came to a point of woods well adapted for building. . . ."<sup>47</sup> Here too the group found beaver rare, and saw no other animals, even the usually abundant buffalo. The Bow also appeared to run south east, and was not considered to be navigable for boats of more than forty pieces of cargo later than the beginning of September.<sup>48</sup> Although they had planned to examine it,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.

<sup>46</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 26. A letter from McKenzie to Simpson, March 1, 1823.

<sup>47</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 20.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



Heron's party passed by the Belly River, as its channel was completely dry at the junction with the Bow and they had learned ". . . on good authority that it was only navigable in August."<sup>49</sup> The Bow River Expedition's journal unfortunately gives no details of the routes followed by the various parties, an omission which may explain why so little attention has been paid to it.

Heavy trading of ammunition on November 11 to Fall Indian war parties led to concern that they would pose a threat to the third large exploring venture, that to be conducted by Harriott to the Fur Mountains,<sup>50</sup> and the Bears Paw and other tributaries of the Missouri.<sup>51</sup> Plans nevertheless progressed, and the party, consisting of Harriott, Sinclair, thirty engaged men, and two Indian guides, set out on November 21 on foot<sup>52</sup> on what was to be by far the most extensive exploration carried out by the Bow River Expedition.

McKenzie accompanied the party for a short distance, and noticed that one of the men, Bourassa, had no gun. Bourassa had apparently burst his first gun while on the expedition with Heron, and having been billed for it, was

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>The Fur (or Fir) Mountains were likely the Cypress Hills.

<sup>51</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journals," fo. 21. Arrowsmith's 1832 map shows no Belly River, Bears Paw or Bears River (the Marias is indicated though), or the "Fur Mountains" or Cypress Hills (recorded by Fidler as early as 1801 - 1802); and even the Milk River is shown as a short north - south stream. It appears that no account of the features of the area was ever forwarded to the official map maker by members of the Expedition.

<sup>52</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 26.



unwilling to risk breaking another. Ordered back to the fort he became abusive. The man returned to the post, gathered his belongings, and set out in the direction of Carlton. A brother - in - law, Beaulieu, joined the deserter when McKenzie and Harriott parted.<sup>53</sup> They spent the rest of the winter with The Feather, a Blackfoot chief.<sup>54</sup> The list of servants for the Expedition bears the terse and damning inscription "Deserted the Service" beside the names of the only two men lost through the winter.<sup>55</sup>

No word of Harriott's party reached the forks until December 22, when a war party of Fall Indians back from fighting the Crows reported having seen them.<sup>56</sup> The explorers arrived on January 8, having

. . . travelled about 850 miles under great difficulties [sic] for want of wood in the open plains for many days, in a S. W. direction, and after minutely examining and traversing the Fir Mountain they saw no trace of Beaver with the exception of two Lodges in a small creek, nor do they suppose that It ever abounded with such numbers as have been reported by the natives; they then pursued their journey by the Sweet Grass Hills, till they got to the Bears River<sup>57</sup> one of the longest streams that fall into the Missurie [sic] , and from 200 to 240 feet wide

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<sup>53</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 24.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 26.

<sup>56</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 24.

<sup>57</sup>Bears River in this case is most likely the Marias, as in reaching the Sweet Grass Hills, the party would have been obliged to cross the Milk River, the only other river in the area which could conceivably be large enough to fit the description given in the account. The journal seems to indicate that the Bears River was reached after the group had passed the Sweet Grass Hills, not before, when they would have encountered the Milk.



the Banks wooded [with] aged Poplars as the Bow River, after travelling along its banks for a considerable distance, they found it completely destitute of Beaver, but numerous in other animals such as Buffalo, Red Deer, Mountain Ram (or Ibex) and Jumping Deer or Antelope.<sup>58</sup>

This dismal report must have completed the disillusionment of the Bow River Expedition with the prospects of the area. No further attempt was made to explore the environs of the new post that winter.

There were, however, a number of more mundane comings and goings at the new post throughout the winter. While these do not tell us much about the knowledge which McKenzie must have accumulated from them, the sheer stamina required to walk hundreds of miles in the midst of a prairie winter makes them tales worth repeating.

Late in October P. C, Pambrun asked to be allowed to accompany a war party of Blackfeet to the Missouri, a request which was denied, although it would have been useful, because of the danger.<sup>59</sup> The freeman, Berger, left on November 3 on a private hunting expedition up the Red Deer River,<sup>60</sup> a journey which ended eleven days later with his return after a journey of three or four days march up the river all for a catch of only four beaver.<sup>61</sup>

Manson, Monro, and Douglas, with eight men and an Indian guide were dispatched on December 2 to carry an express to Fort Edmonton.<sup>62</sup> They arrived on the North

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<sup>58</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 26.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., fo. 16.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., fo. 20.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.



Saskatchewan on December 21, greatly fatigued from their journey, having ". . . suffered hardships from starvation and inclemency of the weather as they have for several nights slept in the Plains where firewood cannot be found. . . ." <sup>63</sup> The Edmonton journalist records their opinion that the prospects at the new post were poor. <sup>64</sup>

Manson and six men, guided by two Indians, departed from Edmonton on January 3 for their return to the South Branch. <sup>65</sup> Alexander Douglas, one of those who did not return with the group, was sent on January 5 with an express from Edmonton to Carlton, from where he was to proceed on to English River. <sup>66</sup> Douglas reached Carlton on February 1, <sup>67</sup> while his former companions arrived at the South Saskatchewan on January 25, after a journey which apparently was as that from the South Branch to Edmonton in December. Manson and his men saw no game during the last nine days of their twenty two day walk, and were forced to eat nine of their dogs. <sup>68</sup>

No travelling was attempted throughout February, the next venture of any distance being a second express sent to Edmonton on March 1, and carried by the halfbreeds Duplesis, Hoole, and Flett, all either midmen or hunters. <sup>69</sup> A Black-

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<sup>63</sup> H. B. A., B.60/a/21, "Edmonton - Post Journal, 1822 - 1823," fo. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., fo. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> H. B. A., B.27/a/12, "Carlton Journal," fo. 31.

<sup>68</sup> H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 28.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., fo. 30. Ranks appear in H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 26.



foot guide led the party which arrived at its destination on March 15.<sup>70</sup> An express which reached the Expedition on April 5 from Edmonton was likely carried by the returning messengers. Colin Robertson, temporary master at Edmonton, enclosed with the packet an express from Pruden at Carlton.<sup>71</sup>

A final group left for Edmonton on April 23, after an eight day delay while an attempt was made to recover their newly purchased and subsequently stolen horses.<sup>72</sup> This party; Heron, Pambrun, Manson, McKay, Welsh, and Indian guides; appeared in Edmonton on May 5 accompanied by the wives of Heron and Welsh. Some of these men were ordered to remain in the North Saskatchewan District,<sup>73</sup> while Heron, Manson, Monro, and two others continued to Carlton.<sup>74</sup> Monro is not listed as having returned to the South Saskatchewan in January, and as he was in neither of the later groups which journeyed from there north, he likely spent the period near Edmonton.

No more major trips were undertaken by the Bow River Expedition until it embarked on April 26. During the course of the winter, the men on the South Saskatchewan had attempted three major explorations of the surrounding territory,

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<sup>70</sup>H. B. A., B.60/a/21, "Edmonton Journal," fo. 18.

<sup>71</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 34.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., fo. 36.

<sup>73</sup>H. B. A., B.60/a/21, "Edmonton Journal," fo. 24.

<sup>74</sup>H. B. A., B. 27/a/12, "Carlton Journal," fo. 42.



with two of these successfully covering, by their own accounts, over 1300 miles. Additionally, three times during the season parties had crossed the plains to Edmonton, and twice the return journey, of over one hundred and seventy-five miles in a straight line, had been made. Much of this travelling was done in the dead of winter, when unbelievable hardships were encountered. Horses, for example, posed one of the larger problems to the winter travellers, starving if they were tied near the nightly camps, or being stolen if set at large to feed.<sup>75</sup> Lack of firewood on the treeless plains could be a further menace, as was the frequent absence of game. Unfortunately, the records only hint at the difficulties met and the methods employed on these expeditions.

Discussion of the construction of the post and the forays into the district surrounding the new post has to a very large degree ignored the presence in this new country of a very large number of native inhabitants. The essential purpose of the Expedition, after all, was to trade with the plains Indians on their own grounds, and to investigate the possibility of extending the trade to include the Missouri Indians. Indians were to play a key role in the decision to bypass the South Saskatchewan in the future. Their behavior was as significant as the poor returns.

Perhaps the best contemporary discussion of these natives is included in Francis Heron's report on the district, dated May 1, 1823, and dispatched to Simpson as the brigade

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<sup>75</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 16.



was leaving the winter quarters.<sup>76</sup> While similar to a proposal contained in the letter sent Simpson on March 14, 1821,<sup>77</sup> Heron's later report, based on first hand experience, is obviously more authoritative.

Heron lists the principal tribes in the region as the Blood, Muddy River (Piegan), Blackfeet, and Fall or Big Bellies (Gros Ventre) tribes. These four tribes comprised the Slave Indians, although the Gros Ventre were linguistically dissimilar. The Blood tribe Heron thought to consist of four hundred tents led by seven chief, the Piegans five or six hundred tents under seventeen chieftains. The Blackfeet, six hundred tents strong, were led by fourteen chiefs, and a similar number of Fall Indians by twenty four chiefs. The chief, Heron noted, was not very strong among the Slave tribes in general, who would not ". . . obey any superior whose sentiments do not accord with his own."<sup>78</sup>

Heron fixed the total Indian population of the area at 2200 tents or 15,400 individuals, higher than his previous estimate of 11,000,<sup>79</sup> or the 12,000 Harriott thought reasonable in a letter to Simpson on March 1, 1823.<sup>80</sup>

The Slaves in general were a nomadic, warlike people who

<sup>76</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Chesterfield House (Bow River) Report 1822 - 1823."

<sup>77</sup>H. B. A., D.4/116, "Simpson Inwards," fos. 29 - 35. Cf. footnotes 60 and 61, Chapter 3.

<sup>78</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Report."

<sup>79</sup>H. B. A., D.4/116, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 31.

<sup>80</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, Ibid., fo. 32.



equated status with success in war and ate their captured enemies. Wealth, the trader wrote, consisted of horses, while pleasure was ". . . derived from women, war, and the Chase."<sup>81</sup>

Although the tribes recognized no fixed hunting grounds, each considered certain areas their own. The Blackfeet claimed the land between the North and South Saskatchewan, next to the Stone (Assiniboine) Indians; with the Bloods taking the area to the west of the Blackfeet, between the Bow and Battle Rivers. The Piegans and Gros Ventre were in possession of the territory from the Bow (or South Saskatchewan) south to the northern branches of the Missouri.<sup>82</sup>

To determine which of these four tribes provided the best or most frequent customers at the post is difficult. Very few references appear in the journal to any other tribes, and these are generally concerned with Stone (Assiniboine) or Crow raiding parties. Only two Stones seem to have visited the post all winter, and they barely escaped from it with their lives.<sup>83</sup> The number of parties of Falls and Blackfeet arriving to trade was nearly equal; as were

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<sup>81</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Report."

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fos. 18 - 19. The two arrived unannounced, and slipped out the back gate (the only reference to this entrance in the record) while the assembled and hostile Blackfeet were delayed by a harangue delivered by the Feathers, a chief who was friendly to the traders.



Blood and Piegan parties. References to the two latter are however less than half as frequent. Though the number of Blackfeet and Gros Ventre visiting the post was thus considerably greater than the numbers of Bloods and Piegans, the value of goods traded may not have corresponded.

The Blackfeet certainly dominated the provisions trade. A particular Blackfoot, the Little Englishman, appears very frequently in the journal as a major supplier of fresh meat to the traders. He also supplied twenty beaver early in the season, almost the only pelts of that animal traded by Blackfeet.<sup>84</sup>

Soon after arriving, Donald McKenzie Jr. recorded that the Fall Indians, although the most independent of all the Slave tribes, had caused the least trouble.<sup>85</sup> As the winter progressed, the traders found that the Falls were less amiable than they had at first appeared, and on March 2, McKenzie wrote: "The Fall Tribes appears to be the most indolent and turbulent of the Slave Tribes."<sup>86</sup> In his report Heron called them the cruelest of the Slaves.<sup>87</sup>

The Piegans probably traded the most valuable skins. One party, for example, which arrived at the post on November 17, traded four hundred beaver.<sup>88</sup> The foothills

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., fo. 29.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., fo. 18.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.

<sup>87</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Reprot."

<sup>88</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 20.



tribe also seems not to have been involved in many of the major incidents with the traders in which their more war-like neighbors participated, although the greater distance between their home grounds and the post may have accounted for this as much as any inherent pacifism.

Throughout the long winter many Indians camped in the immediate vicinity of the post, posing a constant if subtle threat to the outnumbered traders. By September 29 two hundred and fifty tents of natives were encamped near the traders,<sup>89</sup> supplemented the next day by the arrival of a further hundred tents<sup>90</sup> and on October 1 by an additional fifty tents.<sup>91</sup> The ensuing two days saw sixty more native tents rise from the bottomland grass, making a total of about four hundred and sixty tents, or by Heron's reckoning of seven people per tent,<sup>92</sup> over three thousand individuals. On October 8, McKenzie Jr. estimated that from seven to eight hundred tents stood near the post,<sup>93</sup> perhaps more than five thousand Indians. The camp extended for three miles on October 14, and consisted of six thousand natives in twelve hundred tents by a "moderate Calculation."<sup>94</sup>

This huge camp declined somewhat about October 20 as some of the natives packed up to pursue the buffalo,<sup>95</sup> but

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., fo. 10.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., fo. 11.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Report."

<sup>93</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 12.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., fo. 13.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., fo. 15.



a large party must have remained nearby for when it was rumored that two Stone Indians were being harbored inside the post, the camp was able to muster at least a thousand mounted men to surround it.<sup>96</sup> If an allowance is made for exaggeration, this would still indicate that a considerable number of Indians remained in the vicinity even after the hunting parties departed.

The report of the brass swivel gun announced the arrival of six parties of Fall Indians at the establishment on November 11, each party composed of two hundred men and two hundred and fifty young warriors.<sup>97</sup> More Falls appeared the next week, increasing the number of natives in the area by about five hundred.<sup>98</sup> Continual references to the comings and goings of Indians appear in the journal, but it is not until the entry for January 15 that their numbers are again mentioned. On that date about two hundred Fall warriors passed the post on their way to attack the Crow Indians to the south.<sup>99</sup> An island in the river became the home of twenty to thirty tents of Blackfeet a few days later,<sup>100</sup> while a smaller party, about eighty or ninety strong, were received at the trading post on January 20.<sup>101</sup>

The final reference to the number of Indians is made in the January 29 entry in the journal when the clerk wrote

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., fos. 18 - 19.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., fo. 119.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., fo. 20.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., fo. 27.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.



that three or four hundred tents of Fall, Blood, and Blackfeet Indians were camped at the forks ". . . exclusive of those already surrounding us below on both sides,"<sup>102</sup> which seems to indicate that the number of natives camped near the post was, if indeterminate, very substantial. Certainly, if the journal is to be trusted, we can understand the importance of good relations with the potentially overwhelming native encampment.

To the Indian, as to the trader, horses were of considerable value. To the Indian they served as a concrete expression of his wealth and status, as a means of carrying warfare to the camps of his enemies, and as a beast of burden and the chase. To the Company, horses were equally important, both for the mundane tasks of hauling meat and wood, and for the more important hunting and exploratory parties. The loss of mounts was a considerable blow to either group, and played a significant part in the poor returns of the Bow River Expedition. When nearby natives lost their horses, their capacity to hunt and hence trade was severely restricted, while the ability of the trader to explore and support himself economically suffered when his horses disappeared.

The journal contains more than a score of references to horse theft, both among the Indians and from the post. Generally, the Blackfeet, Blood, Piegan and Fall Indians seem to have come out behind in the give and take of horse raiding, for despite occasional references to successful

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.



forays, early in January the record laments the losses suffered by the neighboring tribes to the Crow and Stones. By January 9 so few horses remained that the Fall and Blackfeet were unable to run buffalo, a disaster both to them and to the traders depending on their success.<sup>103</sup>

Earlier in the year, horse theft had posed a similar problem to the traders, one which was never adequately resolved. As early as October 23 the journal complained about the high prices paid to the Indians for provisions, rates higher than those which the Company hunters would have charged had they been able to keep their horses. On that day the journalist noted that half of the horses just purchased to haul wood had been stolen from near the fort.<sup>104</sup> The same difficulty plagued the exploring party led by McKenzie, who found that horses set at large to feed were stolen, while those tied soon starved.<sup>105</sup> From the frequency with which stolen animals were recovered, it seems that most of them were taken by nearby tribes, not by the bands of marauding Stones and Crows who took the Indian horses from the district. For instance, a group stolen on October 25 was returned after a payment to a native the fol-

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., fo. 26. Lack of horses became such a serious problem for the natives that they were reduced to virtual starvation. As McKenzie Jr. wrote on March 7: "It will hardly be thought credible in a Buffalo Country, but it is a certain fact that some of the Chiefs of the Fall and Blackfoot Tribes are prowling about the Fort and picking up all the bones they can find to pound and boil for soup for their families, such is the state of starvation among them." (Ibid., fo. 31.)

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., fo. 15.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., fo. 16.



lowing day,<sup>106</sup> while a keg of rum procured the recovery of an entire band which was taken on November 30.<sup>107</sup> However, eighteen animals which disappeared January 27 were never recovered,<sup>108</sup> nor were a group taken March 12.<sup>109</sup>

The problem was aggravated considerably by starvation among the animals. Even in mid-November the horses were being quartered within the palisade, owing not to the danger of theft but to that of starvation as all nearby grass had been eaten off by Indian horses. Inside the post the animals were fed dried reeds.<sup>110</sup> This did not continue throughout the winter however, as the theft of November 30 must have taken place outside the walls of the post. The feeding problem remained acute for hunger claimed eleven Company horses Christmas Eve.<sup>111</sup> "The Company has lost Forty Horses by Cold and starvation so that our whole existence depends on the natives," the journal notes on December 30.<sup>112</sup>

Indian conflict involved more than just horse theft, as armed conflict between tribes also formed part of the basic cultural pattern of the plains Indians. While relations among the four Slave tribes appears to have been amicable, all took part in engagements with their neighbors the

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., fo. 31.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., fos. 19 - 20.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., fo. 24. On November 21 the journal guessed that 1000 to 1200 horses had been pastured about the post.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., fo. 25.



Assiniboinés, Snakes, Crow, and occasionally even the Cree and Flathead. The warlike character of the plains tribes, partially expressed in horse stealing, proved to be an additional hazard to the traders.

The post was not even finished when a party of Blackfeet arrived from a raid on the Snake Indians which had yielded them a profitable booty in women and horses,<sup>113</sup> the first of many similar incidents mentioned in the journal. The southerly Crow and Snake Indians were their most frequent adversaries, with arrivals and departures of war parties bound for their land taking place throughout the trading season. More than a dozen of these forays are recorded in the record and may have provided the traders with valuable intelligence about the region which they had intended to tap: ". . . they say they saw an American establishment at the Falls of the Rd Deers River [sic] which joins the Missouri from the South, and a great number of Crow Indians Tents surrounding them. . . ." <sup>114</sup> Only occasionally were these visits returned, as when five tents of Piegans were reported murdered by Crow Indians,<sup>115</sup> but in general the Slaves seem to have been relatively secure from attacks by the Crows or Snakes this far north.

Their northerly enemies were a constant threat to the natives near the junction, and the warfare between the Slaves and Stones seems to have made up in ferocity for the more

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., fo. 12.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., fo. 32.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.



gentlemanly attacks from the south. On October 19 the report of a raiding party of Stone (Assiniboine) Indians so alarmed the nearby natives that they swarmed into the fort, causing considerable concern to the traders, who feared treachery,<sup>116</sup> and ten days later three horse stealing Assiniboines were murdered by the Blackfeet and their scalps brought ". . . in great pomp"<sup>117</sup> to the post. The possibility of retaliation, particularly against isolated hunting parties of Hudson's Bay men caused so much concern that no small hunting parties were ever dispatched to any great distance.<sup>118</sup> The conflict between the two tribes deepened when a Stone war party murdered three tents of Piegans while their men were hunting. The enraged hunters pursued the culprits, and killed eighteen or nineteen, meaning virtual open warfare between the two tribes.<sup>119</sup> On November 7 the previously mentioned visit of two Stones to the post took place, and while the visitors luckily escaped with their lives, the tremendous hostility exhibited by the Blackfeet illustrates very well the enmity which had developed between the two tribes. Friends in the summer,<sup>120</sup> they had become bitter enemies.

This state of war did not last long, as for the rest

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., fo. 14.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., fos. 17 - 18.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid. The Stones came, expecting to be greeted ". . . by the Blackfoots with whom they made peace last Summer."



of the trading season no further incidents between the two tribes, with the exception of numerous horse thefts, are recorded. A move towards a formal peace came in early April. The express from Edmonton on April 5 included a speech by the principal chief of the "lower Country Crees" which apparently was a peace feeler and an invitation for the Slave tribes to meet during the summer to arrange a settlement of their differences. The offer was to be explained to the Slave chieftains as they arrived at the post on the South Branch.<sup>121</sup> It seems to have been accompanied by a Stone Indian pipe, for on May 12 a newly arrived group of Blackfeet smoked such a pipe and ". . . returned them some tobacco in token of amnesty."<sup>122</sup>

While the original reference to the peace offer did not directly mention the Stones, but only the Crees, Pruden wrote that eight to nine hundred tents of Stone, Cree, and Saulteau were camped on the South Branch above the Moose Woods where they awaited the departing Bow River Expedition.<sup>123</sup> An entry on April 8 which reported the loss of a number of Blackfeet horses to Stone raiders just a few days after the peace offer had been made confirms their involvement in the maneuver by implying that the act was a breach of promise.<sup>124</sup>

Their own relationship with the Indians concerned the traders more than intertribal squabbles. the journal devotes

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., fo. 34.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., fo. 36.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., fo. 34.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., fo. 35.



its longest entries to this problem, far more space than relations among the Indians receives. Clashes between the white man and the native, varying from near massacre to harmless mischief, show the temper of the Indians as well as anything else, and indicate the constant threat to which the Hudson's Bay men felt themselves exposed.

Only a sampling of the many incidents need be related to illustrate the seriousness of the situation. On October 4 the first of these occurrences appeared in the record, when an Indian threatened to kill the first white man to come his way. John Rowand wrestled away the gun and struck the man with its butt. Donald McKenzie, in view of this incident, ordered that no more rum be given the Indians until the palisades were finished, indicating that the traders were not entirely blameless for the trouble.<sup>125</sup>

During the evening of October 14, after the post had been cleared of natives and the gates closed for the night, an Indian approached MacKay, one of the interpreters, and asked him for rum. Questioned on his entry, the man replied that he had "climbed over." MacKay had gently pushed the native aside, according to the journal, when the Indian pulled a knife and yelled to his countrymen for aid. The traders armed themselves and evicted their unwanted guest while the entire Indian encampment appeared before the gate on horseback; but none of the natives would assist the tres-

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., fo. 11.



passer after the brass three pounder was fired.<sup>126</sup>

On October 29,

. . . one of the natives a Blackfoot after the gates were Shut, demanded admittance and would not be denied in short he used every exertion and violence to force open the Gate. Mr. Rowand came and endeavoured to pacify him on his opening the Gate he got still more insolent and outrageous however after some Altication some of the Natives interfered and carried him off.<sup>127</sup>

Three days later a native fired through the stockade and narrowly missed Alexis DeEu, coming so close to his mark that DeEu's capot was burned by the powder. An Indian later claimed that he had averted the tragedy by knocking the wouldbe assassin's gun from its target.<sup>128</sup> On December 7 the same assailant dispatched a friend with a robe and his gun to attempt to get the forgiveness of the traders, but the offer was rejected.<sup>129</sup>

More trouble occurred on November 10 when two men squaring wood outside the post were shot at and again narrowly missed, while a native standing at the gate of the post threatened to shoot the first white man to pass. Both incidents resulted in the seizure of the guns of the natives.<sup>130</sup>

Robert LaFrambois was threatened on November 23 by a native speaking in the Stone Indian tongue, but when the trader gained the initiative by leveling his gun at the Indian, the attacker reverted to the Slave dialect to beg

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., fo. 13. The same entry notes that the native camp extended for three miles, so the threat was substantial.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., fo. 23.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., fo. 19.



for mercy; showing, the journalist clerk noted, the length the "young rascals" would go in order to threaten the traders.<sup>131</sup>

John Rowand seems to have had much to do with quelling trouble with the Indians. In mid-December, a young Black-foot armed with a bow, arrows, and gun discovered how forcefully Rowand handled threats to his men. His weapons were seized, his bow and arrows consigned to the fire, and he was marched out of the post at pistol point.<sup>132</sup> Two days later Welsh, one of the interpreters, became involved in a scuffle with a group of Indians which led to the closing of the gates and the arming of the traders. Pambrun managed to separate Welsh and the Indians, while Rowand, ". . . thought it prudent to get them pacified but at the same time in such a manner as assured them we did **not** fear them."<sup>133</sup> This attempt to avoid any indication of fear was a primary concern to the traders in settling disputes, and Rowand seems to have been a master at it. With this technique in mind, he lectured a group of Indians who had demanded provisions for a raid on the Missouri and had been refused. Telling the natives that none of the traders feared them, Rowand continued that he had heard them brag ". . . what a pity the whites were so many otherwise they the natives would be better supplied,"<sup>134</sup> and remarked that they were too cowardly to deal with the entire post, but preyed on indiv-

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<sup>131</sup>Ibid., fos. 21 - 22.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., fo. 24.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., fo. 27.



dividuals away from it.<sup>135</sup> Problems with the Indians, McKenzie Jr. noted, always originated with the Fall Indian chiefs and old men or with young Bloods and Blackfeet.<sup>136</sup>

Although much has been said about the martial lives of the Indians, understandably as it effected the security of the post, very little appears in the journal concerning the social patterns of the local Indians, and the few comments which are made deal with interesting, but not typical events. Like many recorders of contemporary events, McKenzie Jr. was interested more in the unusual than the normal pattern of events. A Blood Indian who shot his wife and stabbed her lover obviously attracted his attention more than smoother operating marriages among the natives. That episode found its way into one November entry,<sup>137</sup> as did the following which appeared early in December: ". . . a Young Savage Rascal this evening endeavoured to force a Young Girl close to the Fort, and as she would not consent to his desires he brutally cut off her nose."<sup>138</sup>

There is virtually no mention about the social relations between the traders and native women. One hint did appear in a December entry though: ". . . from the easy virtue of the Hair Dames a number of our men are laid up with the venereal disorder. . . ."<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, despite, or perhaps because of the con-

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., fo. 20.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., fo. 23.



siderable lengths to which the journal of the Expedition goes in discussing the dangers faced by the traders, the actual mechanics of the trade receive very little attention. The largest proportion of entries simply state which natives traded what in general terms, but give no indication of prices or the procedures used in the bartering. Several points nevertheless become clear from the scant material available in the journal and account book.

Rum played an indeterminate but probably significant part in the trade, either as a social preliminary to the actual bartering, or as a trading item of considerable value. A small "treat" of rum was given to some Indians on October 1,<sup>140</sup> and the journal records a similar use of the intoxicant on October 17, augmented this time with tobacco.<sup>141</sup> Possibly these were not isolated incidents but so common that it was felt unnecessary to mention similar occurrences. As a trading good, rum is only occasionally mentioned as on December 6 when apparently a keg was given to some natives in payment for hauling meat,<sup>142</sup> or when later that month a similar reward was made for carrying wood.<sup>143</sup> Two kegs of single distilled rum were being traded each week, McKenzie Jr. wrote late in October, in his only quantitative estimate of the use of the "medicine water."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., fo. 11.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., fo. 14.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., fo. 23.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.



To gauge more accurately the amount of rum used, one need only look at the accounts, which reveal that the Expedition carried thirty kegs of single distilled (Low Indian) rum, supplemented by about 284 gallons of stronger double distilled rum.<sup>145</sup> Of this 135 gallons of the weaker and about 100 gallons of the stronger were returned in the Spring.<sup>146</sup> We may assume that the difference between these amounts, about 400 gallons of single distilled rum and 185 gallons of the double distilled variety, was largely used as trading liquor. Thus we arrive at an approximation of the extent of the use of liquor by the Bow River Expedition, although it must be admitted that the traders themselves could have used a considerable amount of this.<sup>147</sup>

Tobacco seems to have been much more important to the trade. The account book indicates that fifty rolls of twist tobacco of about one hundred and twenty pounds each were included in the outfit, along with a quantity of finer grade "carrot" tobacco and North West Company twist.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>See Appendix

<sup>146</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 22.

<sup>147</sup>This assumes that the kegs were of 18 - 20 gallons each. However, in all fairness, it should be noted that the total amount of rum billed to the Bow River Expedition was not received by it. On October 27 the journal notes that the kegs received from Carlton (177 1/16 gallons according to the accounts - Ibid., fo. 14.) were single distilled but had been billed as double, and were at least one third short. (H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journals," fo. 16.) Considerable correspondence, with no apparent solution, was carried out via the expresses with the North Saskatchewan about this matter. Three kegs of wine are not included in the calculations, being very likely reserved for the personal use of the men.

<sup>148</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 6 - 14.



Cf this less than nine hundred pounds were returned,<sup>149</sup> with the difference of over two tons of tobacco being expended during the winter as gifts and goods for the natives or for the use of the traders themselves.

Like rum, tobacco was used as a preliminary to trade, consuming, by one estimate, one and a half pounds a day.<sup>150</sup> The insistence of the Indians for this indulgence led to considerable complaint on the part of the traders. When chiefs visited the post " . . . invariably they have 13 or 14 Young fellow followers, all expectant for tobacco, in that there is no such thing as giving them a flat denial till the arrival of our different parties who are at present at the mercy of these scamps."<sup>151</sup> As a trading good, tobacco seems to have had considerable value, bringing meat at the rate of one buffalo for a fathom of tobacco until the end of March, when the rate could be reduced to half a fathom per cow.<sup>152</sup>

The journal tells little of life in the post. Those references which do appear are concerned with special occasions, not daily routine, particularly holidays and the indulgences granted on them. On All Saints Day, November 1, the men were given a treat of rum, their fourth since the embarkation of the Expedition from York Factory.<sup>153</sup> Christmas was similarly celebrated although the issue of

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<sup>149</sup>Ibid., fos. 17 - 18.

<sup>150</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," Fo. 28.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., fo. 24.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., fo. 33.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.



spirits at that time may have been more substantial as the Indians were barred from inside the stockade, being warned to keep clear of the traders who became ". . . very wicked when they drink Rum."<sup>154</sup> Although the Expedition carried three prayer books and two Bibles,<sup>155</sup> there is no mention of a religious observance of the day.

New Years appears to have been the most important holiday of the season, for on December 31 the men were issued not only rum, but flour and grease. The day itself was marked by a dance in the evening, from which the natives were again excluded, ". . . as the men were enjoying themselves."<sup>156</sup> The ensuing day, ". . . all hands from the effects of Yesterdays frolic were unfit for any kind of work."<sup>157</sup> Another dance was held on January 10 for Harriott's group of explorers who had missed the regular festivities.<sup>158</sup>

Early in April James Morwick and John Ashburn, provoked when their tent was pelted by thrown debris, shot at a group of their fellow traders. The two culprits were secured after Joseph Sallvis received fourteen or fifteen grains of shot in his head and left arm as a result of the episode. The following day, when it was clear that the wounded man was not seriously injured, the two were released

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<sup>154</sup>Ibid., fo. 24.

<sup>155</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 11.

<sup>156</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 25.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., fo. 26.



on the recognizances of four of their friends.<sup>159</sup> This is the only recorded example of strife among the men at the post apart from the occurrences surrounding the desertion of Bourassa, a tribute to the disciplined and business-like conduct of the Expedition.

A specialized skill or trade was an uncommon asset among fur traders, but the Bow River Expedition counted among its members several who were hired for their specific abilities. Although the cooper, William Wilson, and the two blacksmiths, Pierre Rapin and Pierre Dugardin, received relatively low wages,<sup>160</sup> considerable importance was attached to their occupations, as well it might be.

Wilson had several tasks. Primarily his job was to construct the casks in which the valuable buffalo fat was collected and the tubs used for the preserving of the sought after delicacy, buffalo tongues. It appears that the cooper was also responsible for the actual salting of the tongues, a task which began on November 7<sup>161</sup> and continued through the winter. By February 15 about a thousand tongues had been salted away in four tubs.<sup>162</sup> Making large grease kegs occupied Wilson late in January,<sup>163</sup> and on March 27 he

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid., fo. 35.

<sup>160</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 28. Wilson was paid \$600 Halifax, Dugardin \$800 Halifax, and Rapin \$500 Halifax.

<sup>161</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 18.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., fo. 29.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.



bunged the last of fifty-one kegs of the commodity.<sup>164</sup> These handmade kegs and tubs represented a season's labor, and their contents, valued at over £325<sup>165</sup> added considerably to the returns of the Expedition.

Far from the sources of tools and weapons, it was only the skill of the blacksmith that kept the implements of the traders in good repair and fabricated those articles which for various reasons were not included in the outfit. The smiths made trading awls, an important item to the native, as well as nails and other necessities for the post. To carry on their tasks the two smiths were provided with about 180 pounds of iron and 120 pounds of steel, to a total value of over £6,<sup>166</sup> while they returned iron and steel totalling 274 and 197 pounds respectively.<sup>167</sup> The disparity between these figures may be due to an accounting error, or be the result of the grouping of many of the iron implements under the category of "Old Iron" in the inventory taken at the conclusion of the Expedition.

No less important to the success and even the survival of the Bow River Expedition were its hunters. One of these halfbreeds, Bourassa, deserted the service, but Duplessis, Charles Hoole, the brothers Joseph and Robert La Framboise, and the midman Maurice Piccard were generally able to supply the hundred-man party with fresh meat. Occasional bad luck

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid., fo. 33.

<sup>165</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 17 - 20.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., fos. 1 - 14.      <sup>167</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.



cannot be blamed on the hunters, as even the numerically superior Indians suffered from starvation at these times.

A hunter was a relatively well paid member of the party, for while Bourassa and Hoole received wages of only \$600 Halifax, Duplesis was paid \$900 Halifax, Joseph La Framboise \$2000 Halifax, and Piccard (who was employed as a midman but took an active part in hunting) was paid \$1600 Halifax.<sup>168</sup> The hunters were so important to the post that to relate their activities is in a sense to discuss the winter of the prairies itself. Beginning after the brigade left York Factory, their task continued until the Expedition was little more than a memory. The journal makes several references to the hunters and their role on the voyage upstream, but not until the post was well established do any important details of their operations appear.

The first indication that all was not well is given on October 23, when McKenzie Jr. complained about the high rate which had to be paid the natives for meat, a rate about which little could be done, as the Company hunters had been severely handicapped by the theft of their horses.<sup>169</sup> The magnitude of this difficulty is revealed in an entry four days later which claimed that the men had already con-

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., fos. 25 - 28. Of seventy nine engaged men in this account, only ten received wages of more than \$1000 Halifax. Robert La Framboise does not appear in the list, but is mentioned frequently in the journal. Piccard is listed as a midman in the journal. (H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 7.)

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., fo. 15.



sumed a thousand buffalo traded from the Indians.<sup>170</sup>

Before November 6, the journal did not refer to any attempts by the hunters to obtain meat, but on that day Duplesis and Robert La Framboise left with a trio of men to hunt, returning three days later with only six buffalo.<sup>171</sup> Luck did not improve, for a group of hunters who set out with seventeen horses on November 12 was able to kill only two animals in five days. By November 19 the food situation had become critical. No provisions had been received from the natives for fourteen days; the larder was bare; and Joseph La Framboise, who had left with the hunters on November 12 had yet to return. In an attempt to ease the situation, Piccard and Robert La Framboise were dispatched on horseback to hunt.<sup>173</sup> The return of Joseph La Framboise on November 20 with the meat of five buffalo, as well as the trading of provisions with some natives on November 21 helped somewhat. Dietary security was obtained on November 23 when Robert La Framboise and six men returned, their horses laden with meat, with the report that Joseph La Framboise and Piccard had killed twenty six cows and were also on their way back to the post.<sup>174</sup> Nine horse loads of

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<sup>170</sup>Ibid., fo. 17. Heron's report differs, saying that only six hundred were consumed through the entire winter. (H. B. A., B.34/e/2, "Report.") In 1847 Simpson wrote that: "They had lived in the midst of plenty, having consumed during the winter, fifteen hundred buffalos, besides great quantities of venison . . . ." (Simpson, An Overland Journey Round the World (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1847), p.58.))

<sup>171</sup>H. B. A. B. 34/a/4, "Bow River Journals," fos. 18 - 19.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., fos. 19 - 20.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid.



meat brought in by the hunters on November 28 were supplemented by twenty nine cows which Piccard arrived with on December 2.<sup>175</sup> Complaining that the Indians were driving off the herds, the hunters nevertheless continued lucky when on December 6 Joseph La Framboise returned from the hunting tent to announce that thirty six animals were in storage on a stage. Indian horses were hired to bring in thirty of these animals. Blackfeet traded eighteen additional animals on December 7, and The Feather brought in thirty buffalo to trade the following day when nine carcasses were also received from the hunting tent. On December 10 ten more cows arrived from The Feather, and the next day natives traded fifteen more cows and arrived with the thirty animals from the hunting tent.<sup>176</sup>

Such plenty could not last, and the inevitable slump in the returns from the hunters struck the post early in December. Hunting is not mentioned again until December 24, when the hunters had twenty nine cows on stages but had lost eleven more horses. Two men and all the remaining horses were dispatched to the tent on December 30, but as they returned emptyhanded the following day, likely the buffalo had moved on.<sup>177</sup>

January was a month of cold weather and scanty hunting returns. The supply of provisions from the natives diminished as increasing numbers of their horses were stolen.

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., fo. 22.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., fo. 23.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., fos. 24 - 25.



Not enough beaten meat had been received for 150 pemmicans and the party doubted whether it would be able to double its stock during the remainder of the trading season.

Piccard, who apparently hunted near the post, was able to kill seven animals, while eighteen others are mentioned as having been shot during the month.<sup>178</sup>

Four hundred joints of fresh or "green" meat had been placed in the icehouse by February 5, but the starving natives bore witness to the difficulty of securing provisions. The Company horses which remained had become useless because of their broken health and the depth of the snow, and it became necessary to hire native dogs in mid February to carry the animals killed by the hunters. The only Indian provisions supplied the post in February were forty buffalo received from the Blackfeet on the 10th and four others traded from the industrious Little Englishman. The Company hunters did little better, as on February only half the amount of meat which would be needed for the use of the men had been iced away.<sup>179</sup>

The diminishing supply of fresh meat caused considerable concern during March, the last full month spent at the post and one in which a final attempt to secure sufficient provisions both for the return journey and to defray a portion of the cost of the Expedition had to be made. The icehouse stock had shrunk considerably. On successive days attempts were made to increase the flow of meat to the post.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., fos. 26 - 28.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., fos. 28 - 29.



On March 4 the hunters with four other men, six sleds and dogs, and six horses, set out, but returned two days later with no meat. While this party hunted, fifteen buffalo were traded from some Blackfeet, a quantity far from filling the demands of the large post, but the first meat obtained from the Indians in two weeks.<sup>180</sup>

Donald McKenzie, apparently believing that only a bold step could solve the provisions problem, ordered P. C. Pambrun to submit a list of forty men to accompany the hunters down river under the charge of one of the gentlemen. On March 7, this party, thirty six men, two hunters, the freeman Berger, and Donald Manson, took leave of the post. Soon thereafter McKenzie offered a group of Blackfeet a large keg of Indian rum as an inducement to hunt in addition to the normal rate of a fathom of tobacco for twenty cows.<sup>181</sup> By then the storehouse food reserve had declined to only a week's supply and the closest buffalo herds were reported to be no nearer than the Fir Mountains ". . . which is about 100 miles from here."<sup>182</sup>

Then fortune began to smile on the traders, for on March 14 three of the men from Manson's hunting party returned to report that it had killed six cows, but because of the soft snow could not haul them in to the post. Several

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., fo. 31. The rate was one fathom per cow according to a later journal entry, that of March 31. (Ibid., fo. 33.)

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., fo. 31. Presumably the Fir Mountain was the Cypress Hills.



days later some Blackfeet traded five animals while on February 18 the Little Englishman brought in three cows and Manson returned. He reported shooting thirteen buffalo cows near his camp about forty miles below the post, but again these could not be brought back because of the condition of the snow. From February 19, when a herd of the valuable animals passed near the post, the situation improved, and from that date the journal gives almost daily an account of the numbers of animals killed, so that by April 1 the ice-house contained the meat of eighty animals, albeit of poor quality. With the increasingly good returns of meat, the price paid to the Indians could be reduced, and on March 31 it was halved. Similarly, the hunting party, conceived in desparation, was recalled on April 2 and returned to the post a week later.<sup>183</sup>

Four days prior to the embarkation of the party on April 27, twenty-four men were sent with two of the boats and a pair of hunters to attempt to kill more buffalo. While it is difficult to say how this particular group fared, one can conclude that the most successful buffalo hunts of the entire season took place as the Expedition proceeded leisurely downstream towards Carlton House. An advanced party of hunters got fourteen buffalo on April 28, bagging two more on the final day of that month. Piccard, one of those preceding the brigade, returned on May 3 to report that he had left ten buffalo downstream. On May 5

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., fos. 32 - 34.



Duplesis and Joseph La Framboise shot twelve buffalo, one less than the number shot on May 8. Six of the animals fell on May 9; while on May 11 the hunters got thirty buffalo, augmented by twenty eight on May 12 and twenty more two days later. The post journal states that over a hundred animals were killed in the period from May 11 to 14, and though this total seems to be at variance with the daily totals given, it is certain that a very large number were killed.<sup>184</sup> May 19 added thirty buffalo to the total; while May 21 saw an additional thirty slain.<sup>185</sup> When the amount of labor required to skin and clean an animal as large as the bison is considered, the magnitude of the task comes into a proper perspective as one which must have engaged most of the hands for days at a time.

With these large kills of buffalo, the hunters began to fade from the picture, more likely from a decreasing need for their services than from an absence of game. Piccard and fifteen men were hunting on April 25, and the halfbreed ventured out the following day, but these hunts were apparently not considered important enough to mention whether or not they met with success. Joseph La Framboise, the highest paid and perhaps most important of the hunters was beset with tragedy late in May, when his wife, mortally ill on May 25, died on May 27.<sup>186</sup>

This observation of the Company hunters who accom-

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<sup>184</sup>Ibid., fos. 37 - 38.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid., fo. 38.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., fo. 39.



panied the Bow River Expedition and the fluctuations in the stock of fresh meat, makes possible several generalizations about the plains trade. In the first place the importance of the buffalo cannot be exaggerated. The efforts of these few hunters prove that as a provisioning post the location was far too exposed to the ravages of the Indian horse thieves to be advantageous. Even when well mounted, the hunters found that the Indians often drove the buffalo beyond their reach accidentally by their chasing type of hunt, or deliberately to increase the prices paid for provisions. The problem was further complicated by the lack of sufficient wood with which to build the pounds necessary for large scale and efficient buffalo hunting.<sup>187</sup>

Outnumbered as the traders were, their departure was an important and carefully planned move. Preparations occupied a large proportion of the working hours from February until late in April. They had two aspects. The first was the actual construction and packing which the movement of so large a number of men and goods required; while the second involved the psychological preparation of the Indians for the loss of the traders from their midst. Both were critical for a safe departure.

The traders early began to lay plans for embarkation. In December, a pit saw was constructed on an island near the post to saw planks for bateaux to carry out returns and

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<sup>187</sup>H. B. A., B.34/e/1, "Report."



untraded goods.<sup>188</sup> The first indication that problems might be encountered with the natives on departure was given later that month when some Blackfeet informed the traders that the Fall Indians planned to waylay them in the spring on their way down the river.<sup>189</sup> From then on it was obvious that mollifying the Indians was as necessary as building boats.

In January the men were busy sawing lumber for bateaux. On January 22, for example, eight men worked at the two pitsaws,<sup>190</sup> while on January 31 a blacksmith was occupied making nails for the vessels.<sup>191</sup> By February other preparations began in earnest. A press, necessary for packing furs and hides, was constructed from local wood, planks were carried from the island to the post, and on February 26 eight men began the actual building of the bateaux.<sup>192</sup> The Indian threat to the departure was repeated on February 21 when Rowand was told by Blackfeet that the Blood and Fall Indians planned to stop the departure of the brigade if they believed the post was to be abandoned.<sup>193</sup>

If preparations were begun in January, during March and April they appear to have been the focus of all activity at the post. Progress on the bateaux was rapid, as the first was taken from its stocks on March 10, and six had been

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<sup>188</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 23.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., fo. 27.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., fo. 28.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., fos. 29 - 30.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., fo. 34.



removed from the forms by March 23.<sup>194</sup> Although no mention is made of a seventh vessel, an eighth was completed on April 3, the day before the river began to break up.<sup>195</sup>

A clue, but little more than that, is given as to the activities of those men who were engaged in neither boat building nor hunting during this period. The most commonly cited jobs were those of baling and pressing packs of furs and hides, making pemmican, carving oars,<sup>196</sup> and repairing the boats and canoes brought up in the fall. Trade had dwindled so much that on March 6 Anthony Fiestel and a helper were assigned the task of baling the trading goods for the return.<sup>197</sup>

John Rowand began his attempts to allay the suspicions of the natives on March 13, resorting, like his predecessor at the location, John MacDonald of Garth, to a trick. He dispatched a Fall Indian chief with his medicine pipe and a supply of tobacco to smoke with his fellow chieftains and tell them to prepare ". . . for a party of our people who are to come from the Mountain House to build on their lands. . . ." <sup>198</sup> Apparently Rowand also attempted simultaneously to create suspense about the time set for the embarkation. Rumors of trouble circulated among the Fall

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid., fo. 31.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., fo. 34.

<sup>196</sup>Poplar oars were to be used until the brigade reached the North Saskatchewan where more serviceable ones could be obtained. (Ibid., fo. 33.)

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid., fo. 31. "Mountain House" was the post more commonly known today as Rocky Mountain House.



Indians as late as March 22,<sup>199</sup> but by April 2 the situation appears to have improved. The natives, fully expecting a large party from "Mountain House," had become much friendlier since the pipe was passed.<sup>200</sup> The subterfuge must have continued to work, for no further mention is made of the Indian menace.

From the "Confluence of the Bow and Red Deers River," the Bow River Expedition dispatched an express to Simpson at Fort Edmonton on March 1.<sup>201</sup> The packet, containing letters from McKenzie, Rowand, Heron, and Harriott was both a pessimistic analysis of future prospects and a summary of the party's experiences.

Donald McKenzie's letter briefly described the major events at the post, from the arrival of the Expedition, through the exploring parties to the difficulties with the natives. Blaming the unfriendliness of the Indians for his failure to expand beyond a single post, McKenze felt assured that native reports could be used to judge the areas which had not been explored.

I fully consider the undertaking to have recieved  
[sic] a fair trial and the result I look upon as a  
total failure . . . .<sup>202</sup>

Dismissing the region about the post as too poor in beaver (most of the skins of that animal traded at the post having been taken by war parties to the Columbia) to just-

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<sup>199</sup>Ibid., fo. 33.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid., fo. 34.

<sup>201</sup>See supra, pp. 108 - 109.

<sup>202</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 29.



ify the expense, McKenzie outlined his thoughts on the Missouri basin to the south. The veteran trader and former Astor employee believed that the Americans, tapping the region since 1804, might have already removed any furs which had existed there. As he wrote: ". . . the riches we are now contending for may have been long ago sent to market by the Americans upon one side and by ourselves on the other."<sup>203</sup> McKenzie saw the Americans as posing little threat to the Hudson's Bay Company in the region as they lacked a water route into it; a difficulty compounded by the rooted enmity of the Indians to the Americans. He advised against occupying the post the following year as the returns had been "despicable" with only two thirds of the provisions demanded secured.<sup>204</sup>

John Rowand was more concerned with revamping his former Department, the North Saskatchewan, than with the Bow River Expedition. He proposed, briefly, to economize in its operation by reducing superfluous hands; while retaining Rocky Mountain House for the Piegans, Falls, and freemen and Edmonton for the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Sarcees. Carlton could be moved either to the Battle River or the Eagle Hills to improve its trade.<sup>205</sup>

Francis Heron, whose optimistic letters to Simpson had played a large part in initiating the scheme, wrote an excuse laden, apologetic letter to the Governor. He felt that

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<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., fo. 27.



the Slave tribes had decoyed the party into a country which, contrary to his expectations and Indian reports, was destitute of beaver. The Slaves made trapping impossible by their hostility, even had the region abounded in beaver. Heron felt that the Indians themselves had changed a great deal: "I never thought it possible that any indians could have changed so much for the worse, in so short a time, as the Slave Indians have done since I saw them last. . . ." <sup>206</sup>

Agreeing with McKenzie as to the American threat, Heron expressed a ". . . decided preference to the North Branch." <sup>207</sup>

John Edward Harriott, writing at McKenzie's request, concentrated on his own venture southward. The "Fir Mountains" which he had thoroughly but fruitlessly searched for furs had had as great a reputation for skins as the Missouri. The great river itself seemed to hold little more promise, and although he had been forbidden by his instructions from proceeding further towards the mountains than he had, Harriott had been informed by Indian guides that no beaver were to be found to the east of the Rockies except in one branch of the Missouri flowing through Crow Indian lands. This stream, probably the Yellowstone River, had, his informants reported, been ruined by the Americans who used large boats. In conclusion he expressed the fear that the Indians about the place, whom he put at 12,000, would rush the traders as they embarked. <sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., fo. 31.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., fos. 31 - 32.



Simpson's replies were penned on March 22, and arrived at the prairie post with the express on April 5. The Governor's hopes for the success of the Expedition had long since evaporated. Before receiving the dispatch from the South Branch, he wrote to William Connolly on March 3: "It is with the deepest concern that I have to intimate that all our sanguine hopes in regards to the South Branch affair are blasted, and that the mines of Wealth Calculated on from thence are vanished. . . ." <sup>209</sup> To the Governor the complete failure of the mission necessitated the total abandonment of the post.

Simpson addressed a long letter to Donald McKenzie, both lamenting his progress and congratulating him on the safety of his men. The Governor at this time subscribed to the view that the Indians had enticed the Company into the region with false reports of vast profits to be made, and agreed that even had furs abounded, the hostility of the natives would have made trapping them impossible. Furthermore, the North Branch would have to continue to supply provisions, as the lack of wood for pounds made that pursuit unreliable on the more southerly river. Simpson at Fort Edmonton, with the concurrence of Colin Robertson, had decided that ". . . we should at once turn our attention to this part of the Country," <sup>210</sup> and concentrate on making it pay. The party should at once ". . . proceed to the only

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<sup>209</sup>H. B. A., D.4/2, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 29.

<sup>210</sup>Ibid., fos. 35 - 36.



steps which are now left us, that of making good our retreat, from the inhospitable and savage hords by whom you are surrounded."<sup>211</sup> The conduct of the Expedition had reflected credit on all the gentlemen involved, and on the "spirited and enterprizing" example shown by the leader whose conduct earned him the thanks of the Honorable Committee and the Council.<sup>212</sup>

The rest of the Governor's letter deals with the mechanics of the abandonment. The party was to leave at the opening of navigation and forward its returns to Cumberland House, but was to avoid reaching that post before June 5 as ice on the lake would stop it there, consuming valuable provisions. This explains the leisurely pace at which the Expedition proceeded down the South Branch. Left over trading goods, the "remains," were to be left at Carlton.

Dealing with the disposition of the human resources of the Expedition, Simpson ordered McKenzie not to renew the contracts of any of the enlisted men, as the service was badly over-staffed, but new postings for some of the officers were included. Rowand and La Rocque were given permission to travel out to York Factory for the summer. Heron and Pambrun were to journey to Edmonton as soon as possible, along with Fisher who would be sent to Rocky Mountain House for the summer. Harriott was to spend the summer in charge at Carlton while Rowand could remain with the Expedition

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<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid.



where he was needed, or could travel to Edmonton to meet the Governor if he chose. Enclosed in the letter was a list of the headings which were to be used in compiling a report on the District for the Committee and Council.<sup>213</sup>

Simpson's letter to John Rowand in this express packet dealt only with the arrangements for the coming summer. To Francis Heron he wrote: "Your former ideas of this subject corresponded with those of many Gentlemen, who were supposed from their long residence in these parts, to have been well informed in regard to the disposition of the Natives, and resources of the country but which I am deeply concerned to find turned out erroneous."<sup>214</sup> A subtle reprimand in the Simpson style dealt out to one who perhaps deserved worse -- this was possibly the Governor's intention in writing Heron. Harriott received a short letter which only thanked him for his communication to the Governor and for the part which he played in the Expedition.<sup>215</sup>

Through the spring preparations continued unabated. Wood was cut and a ninth bateau begun, hides and robes were pressed, and the canoes and boats used to carry the Expedition to the area were put into shape for the return voyage. On April 12 eight of the new bateaux were carried from the post to the river for caulking with leather and pitch, a job which required more than two thousand pounds

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<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid., fos. 38 - 39.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid., fo. 39.



of gum.<sup>216</sup> The task was completed when on April 24 all the boats were placed in the river. April 17 saw two men packing the most desired goods (ie. tobacco, rum, and ammunition) into buffalo bags in order to secure them from the prying eyes of the natives. Manson, Heron, and Pambrun, in accordance with Simpson's orders prepared to leave for Fort Edmonton in company with the interpreters MacKay and Welsh. Although delayed for a week to attempt to recover their stolen horses, the party was able to depart on April 23.

On April 25 the journal noted that ". . . the cargoes of the different Crafts are to be given out in the course of tomorrow to be ready for a start while the Natives are away from the Forks,"<sup>217</sup> while on the following day: "Boats and Batteaux with Two Canoes rec'd their loading in the course of the day and the whole of their Cargoes embarked by evening."<sup>218</sup> The brigade left the fort after breakfast on April 27, having first removed the valuable iron from the buildings.<sup>219</sup> The last official occupants of Chesterfield House passed from view around a bend in the prairie river.

Just before the departure of the brigade, Rowand and McKenzie both wrote letters to Governor Simpson which presumably were carried by Heron, Pambrun and Manson on their

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<sup>216</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 36. The total gum and pitch listed in the accounts of the Expedition is barely 200 pounds, therefore we must assume that some other source of the material, perhaps the Cypress Hills, was tapped. (H. B.A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 4 - 15.)

<sup>217</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 37.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid.

<sup>219</sup>Ibid.



horseback journey to Edmonton. Like his earlier letters to the Governor, Rowand's letter of April 16 dealt primarily with the North S<sub>a</sub>skatchewan, but did comment on his superior, McKenzie, writing that he was careful, determined, and sensible, but that his health was poor. Rowand attributed the sudden disappearance of the Indians from the post, vital to the ease with which the leave taking was made, to a lack of food -- ". . . we are therefore in hopes we shall get off unmolested."<sup>220</sup>

McKenzie's letter, dated April 20, merely expressed thanks for Simpson's approval of his conduct, which he said brought some satisfaction in the midst of his disappointment. The remains McKenzie placed at one hundred and twenty pieces, a return which he attempted to justify in view of the miserable proceeds by pointing out that much of the tobacco received at York was damaged, that the rum was often short of measure, that large amounts of ammunition had been expended by the traders themselves, and that the consumption of food at the post was immense. Departing by the first or second of May, the party expected to reach Carlton by the end of that month.<sup>221</sup>

The trip from the Carlton portage to the junction of the Red Deer River and the South S<sub>a</sub>skatchewan had taken about two weeks, but the return, in spite of the advantages of a favoring current, was stretched to just over a month's

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<sup>220</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," fos. 42 - 43.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid., fos. 43 - 44.



time, in accordance with Simpson's injunction not to reach Cumberland House before June 5.

The entries in the journal for the return are brief but full of details about the remarkable hunting successes, the drying and preparing of meat, and the journey itself. From the first the party progressed in small stages, a league on April 29, four or five miles on May 1, and another league on May 3. The men camped from May 1 to 3 on a "commanding plain" while the women in the brigade cut up the meat secured by the hunters.<sup>222</sup> On May 4 the men were ". . . Cuttg. and Melting Backfats which on opening our are spoiling,"<sup>223</sup> while May 6 saw ". . . the remr. of the Bales of Backfats cut up melted and put up in Kegs. . . ." <sup>224</sup>

On May 9 a camp was established which was occupied until May 17, a camp at which perhaps a hundred buffalo were killed, with the largest part of these cut and dried. No clue is given to the location of this site, abandoned for a wooded point on May 17. The routine of small amounts of travelling, interspersed with stops to dry meat, continued for most of the rest of the trip down to Carlton, although as the trip progressed the distances covered became longer, thirty five miles on May 24 and thirty the following day.<sup>225</sup>

Indians, either hostile or friendly, were not seen at all during the downstream journey, although the sighting of

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<sup>222</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fo. 37.

<sup>223</sup>Ibid.

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

<sup>225</sup>Ibid., fos. 38 - 39.



tracks and freshly killed meat caused concern on May 27 and 28.<sup>226</sup> Fur bearing animals were equally scarce. Berger did manage to trap twenty beaver on May 26, but these were the only ones mentioned in the journal during the entire month - long journey.<sup>227</sup>

Simpson's intention to leave the "remains" of the Bow River Expedition at Carlton changed early in May. On the ninth of that month he wrote Pruden with a new plan:

". . . as I consider it unsafe to leave so much valuable property inland during the summer, which might be a strong teptation to your discontented Assiniboines and Beaver Hill Crees you will be so good as to forward the whole to Cumberland, except such pieces as it may be necessary to reserve for the Summer consumption."<sup>228</sup> McKenzie was informed of this change in a letter of May 10.<sup>229</sup>

Nearing the Carlton crossing on May 29, Donald McKenzie dispatched a note to Simpson, by then awaiting him at Carlton, requesting instructions about the disposition of the goods, a list of which he included. As he planned reaching the crossing the following day, he asked for an immediate response.<sup>230</sup> The Governor answered the note the same day, including a list of goods to be left in cache at "Decoigne's

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<sup>226</sup>Ibid., fo. 39

<sup>227</sup>Ibid.

<sup>228</sup>H. B. A., D.4/2, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 42.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid., fos. 43 - 44.

<sup>230</sup>H. B. A., D.4/117, "Simpson Inwards," fo. 45.



Old Fort"<sup>231</sup> for Carlton, and congratulating the leader for the safe arrival of his brigade.<sup>232</sup>

The Expedition reached the old fort at the portage across from Carlton on May 30, and after receiving Simpson's instructions, McKenzie and Rowand proceeded on ahead with Simpson while the men placed ammunition and tobacco in the cache for the North Saskatchewan post. Departing the following day, the Expedition arrived at Cumberland House on June 2. Here the brigade, consisting at this point of six boats, ten bateaux, and a canoe, received new goods to carry out, having placed the remainder of its unused goods in depot at the old post. McKenzie went on with the Governor, while John Rowand took charge of the Expedition.<sup>233</sup>

The final leg of the trip, including a delay from June 11 to 16 caused by ice on the lake, was almost without event. Norway House was reached on June 19, Oxford House on June 24, and on July 1, 1823, the last words in the journal read ". . . arrived at York Factory about 3 o'clock."<sup>234</sup> The last page in the little-known chapter in the history of the South Saskatchewan River and the Hudson's Bay Company had been turned.

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<sup>231</sup>Francis Decoigne operated a North West Company post on the South Saskatchewan in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company's Carlton House from 1808 to 1810. He was engaged by Colin Robertson in 1814 and Served the H. B. Co. until 1818. (Rich, ed., Robertson's Letters, p. .)

<sup>232</sup>H. B. A., D.4/2, "Simpson Outwards," fo. 45.

<sup>233</sup>H. B. A., B.34/a/4, "Bow River Journal," fos. 39 - 40.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid., fo. 41.



## CONCLUSION

### Bow River Expedition

#### A Total Failure?

Although the end of the Bow River Expedition was brought about by a number of factors, particularly Indian hostility and poor prospects for furs in the area drained by the South Saskatchewan, its balance sheet tells a more favorable story. The Expedition was a failure in the sense that it could not be continued, and did not open the expected new avenue of trade, but it does not appear to have lost much, if any, money.

The skins procured during the season had a value, according to the account book, of £1001/5/6, of which just over £900 was made up of beaver skins, the staple of the trade.<sup>1</sup> The Expedition left a good deal of its "country produce" (buffalo skins, provisions, and similar items) along with unused goods at the various posts it passed on the journey to York Factory. At Carlton the value of the country produce sold was only £8/3/2, although when the value of other goods left was added, a total of £538/17/11 is obtained.<sup>2</sup> Cumberland House was supplied goods worth

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<sup>1</sup>H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 29. Buffalo robes and skins were classed as country produce, not as furs.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., fo. 17.



£51/9/3, the vast majority of which was composed of country produce.<sup>3</sup> At Norway House, the value of goods left totaled £2639/18/9, again largely country produce, including over ten tons of pemmican, one ton of dried meat, and over 3,300 buffalo skins.<sup>4</sup> York Factory took goods valued at £600/6/4.<sup>5</sup>

Not all the goods remaining were supplied to the various posts enroute. A good deal of the remains, to the value of £776/7/6, were left in depot at Cumberland House for use the ensuing season.<sup>6</sup> An even larger quantity of goods, worth £938/10/1, were sold to various servants of the Company.<sup>7</sup> When all these credits to the account of the Expedition are added, a total of £6556/9/7 is realized.

The debit side of the ledger contains a similar number of entries. The brigade had received goods worth £2332/11/11 from York Factory,<sup>8</sup> valued at £253, 5d. from Norway House,<sup>9</sup> costing £256/19/6 from Cumberland House, and priced at £524/10/11 from Carlton.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the party purchased goods from Isle a la Crosse in 1823 valued at £5/15/6.<sup>12</sup> Total wages for the Expedition are listed at £2777/1/6, a figure which does not include £215/7 marked as ". . . credit to servants for horses and cancelled debt etc,"<sup>13</sup> and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., fo. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., fos. 8 - 9.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., fos. 12 - 15.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., fos. 18 - 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., fos. 21 - 28.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., fos. 3 - 6.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., fos. 10 - 12.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.



£20 which was apparently owing Hugh Monro for wages.<sup>14</sup> The total debit came out to £6385/6/6, several hundred pounds less than the credits listed in the accounts.

While this appears to show that a small profit was made by the Bow River Expedition, a pencilled notation at the bottom of the balance sheet suggests otherwise. Very faint, only the words "There will be no profit as the inventories are actually of no more value than the YF prices of the food. . . ." <sup>15</sup> are legible. Even if discrepancies in prices at York Factory (YF) and the inland posts cancels out any profit, no large loss could have been suffered by the Company. In an 1847 account of his journey around the world, Simpson mentioned the Bow River Expedition: "Finding that the resources of the country had been overrated, our people retired the following year with the loss of a considerable part of the original outlay of £10,000, carrying with them an enormous quantity of leather, but very few furs." <sup>16</sup> Simpson's estimate of the cost of the Expedition and his statement concerning the loss suffered by the party are in obvious disagreement with the account book. Like Fidler's expeditions into the same region, Donald McKenzie and his party had not in fact lost a great deal of money, but had been forced by other considerations to withdraw. The notion that the post lost a great deal of money persists in some of the modern sources despite the account book and

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., fo. 30.

<sup>16</sup>Simpson, Overland Journey, p. 58.



the strength it lends to a varying interpretation of the move.<sup>17</sup>

A. S. Morton came closest to a realistic appraisal of the withdrawal from the South Saskatchewan. In his Sir George Simpson he wrote:

. . . the whole plan was based on ignorance of the resources of the South Saskatchewan in the matter of furs and provisions. That river makes a great sweep out into the bold prairies where there was no food for beaver in the form of poplar, aspen and willow, and even the buffalo were scarce during the winter, for they needed the protection of the clumps of bush found in the north in the midst of good prairie grazing ground. Thus the South Saskatchewan expedition was doomed to failure.<sup>18</sup>

Other factors were of course important. The fact that the party found no traces of good beaver country anywhere in the area had much to do with the abandonment, as the original plan had seen the junction post only as a supply base for posts to be built further upstream. When this became unfeasible, the entire scheme was bound to fail. The threat of American traders became less important when the Company came to realize that there was nothing over which to compete.

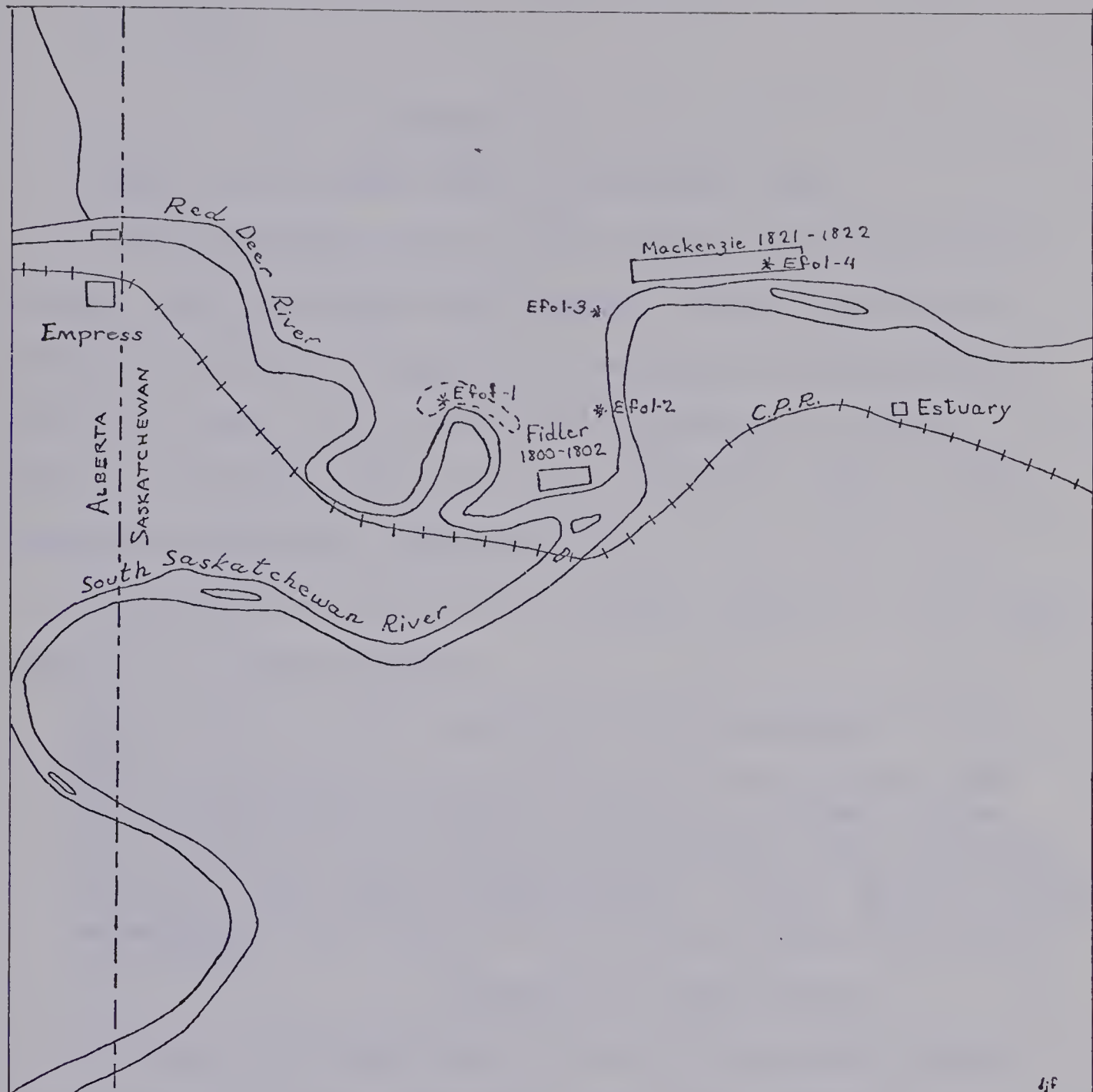
The failure of the South Saskatchewan led inevitably to a renewed emphasis on the old trading pattern, and Simpson, acting on the advice of men like John Rowand, threw himself into the task of revitalizing the North Saskatchewan and expanding beyond it.

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<sup>17</sup>C. M. MacInnes' In the Shadow of the Rockies and R. C. Pinkerton, The Gentlemen Adventurers (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1931) both emphasize this factor.

<sup>18</sup>A. S. Morton, Sir George Simpson (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons (Canada) Ltd., 1944)







Map 3.--The Junction Area

Scale: 1 inch = 2 miles

### Legend

-  - Area in which Palliser's map shows Chesterfield House.
-  - Locations for posts suggested in their journals.
- \* - Sites suggested by C. E. Watson in his "Chesterfield flats survey material," after work done in September, 1966.



## APPENDIX A

### James Bird's Memorandum to Nicholas Garry

This document exists in two significantly different forms. One, presumably the original letter from Bird to Garry, is in Garry's papers in the Hudson's Bay Archives,<sup>1</sup> while the other is published as an appendix to Garry's Diary, and is his version of the memorandum which he forwarded to the London Committee.<sup>2</sup>

The Archives copy of the document bears the following inscription on the reverse:

Memo<sup>d</sup> from J. Bird regarding a hunting Party 8 July 1821

This memorandum is well worthy of consideration and should be decided on by the Council at Norway House. No time can be as proper as the present, when the Company is burden with a superfluity of men. If Mr. Donald McKenzie comes from the Columbia & if he agrees to the arrangement he would be the fittest person to lead the Expedition.

[signed] W. McGillivray

To make the comparison of the two documents easier, the version from the published Diary will be given here, but in cases where that version has additions from the original they will be marked by parenthesis thus (). Material which appears in Bird's memorandum but not in Garry's will be added between slashes thus //.

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<sup>1</sup>H. B. A., E.11/2, "Nicholas Garry - Correspondence," fos. 126 - 127.

<sup>2</sup>Garry, "Diary," p. 197.



The document reads:

(I fear the old Hudson's Bay Servants are too fond of old Regulations to encourage a new Branch of Trade and Innovations.)

I conceive that about 60 men, ((Canadian) voyageurs, would be required for an Expedition towards the Sources of the Missouri (and South Branch of the Saskatchewan). Of these it would be necessary to leave about 30 to form a Settlement for the Blackfeet and Fall Indians near the Forks of the Red Deer River.

This Settlement would not require an expensive Outfit of Goods, and Fox, Beaver /Provisions/ and Buffalo Hides might be procured in sufficient Quantities to prevent any loss. To ensure Success in the principal Object of the Expedition about One Hundred Beaver Hunters say Irriquois/, /Half Breeds, and free Canadians would be necessary as little Dependence can be placed on the Industry of the Natives. A strong Party of these should proceed by Land with the Boats or Canoes as they ascend the River. The remaining Party might proceed by Land from Fort Augustus in Company with (the) Muddy River Indians or Piegans along the Borders of the Rocky Mountains.

I should conceive that the Nature of the Expedition, before it is entered on, be explained to the Piegans and their Consent obtained and I should further think it necessary to prepare a kind of Fort (or Store) /and Stores/ to put the goods in when the Boats (arrive) /reach their destination/.

Beaver are not I believe to be found in great Number at any great Distance north of the more northerly Branches of the Missouri /Missouri/. A Settlement on the Waters of the South Branch (of the Saskatchewan) would (not be advisable) /not therefore be convenient/ and I (should) /would/ recommend (the Settlement to be) /that the principal settlement should be/ formed on Island in a Lake<sup>(1)</sup> which, if my information is correct, lies between the Waters of the two rivers /and would answer the purpose in every aspect/. (Mr. Clarke and Mr. Heron would be well adapted for such an Expedition.) /More correct information however in this . . . could be obtained by the party which in my opinion could proceed the boats or Canoes. Mr. Rowand or Mr. Pruden would be very fit persons to head such a reconnoitering party./

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(1) Bad Water Lake



## APPENDIX B

### .Outfit - Bow River Expedition

This appendix is a resume of the supplies taken by the Bow River Expedition in 1822 - 23, and comes from the account book of the Expedition. It has been reorganized alphabetically and therefore ignores the sources of the various goods. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 3 - 6.)

Adzes	3	
Anvils	1	
Augers	11	
Awls	435	
Axes		
cooper's	1	
large	12	
pike	1	
round head large	12	
round head half	100	
round head small	200	
small	3	
square head or large		
felling	18	
square head half	6	
Beads		
blue agate	30	bundles
white agate	10	"
agate	$\frac{1}{2}$	"
blue barley corn	10	"
white barley corn	10	"
barley corn	$\frac{1}{2}$	"
blue egg	8	pounds
light blue corn	23	"
white corn	23	"
common	$78\frac{1}{2}$	"
striped wampum	24	"
Bells, hawk	144	
Belts, Canada # 2	1	
Bellows	1	
Bibles	3	



Blankets <sup>1</sup>	
plain 3 points	27
plain 2½ points	26
plain 2 points	12
plain 1½ points	20
plain 1 point	20
striped 2½ points	1
Book, prayer	1
Boxes, tobacco	5
Brace and bits	1
Buttons	
coat	309
plated	153
pewter	432
Candlesticks	2
Capotes <sup>2</sup>	
mixed cloth 2d.	1
blue and mixed cloth 2d.	20
white cloth 3 ells <sup>3</sup>	20
white and blue cloth	
3½ ells	30
white and blue cloth	
4 ells	30
others 1½ ells	1
others 3½ ells	1
others 4 ells	1
Caps, jockey	1
Cards, playing	1
Chissels	95
Chives	1
Cloth	
light blue	2 yards
green 2d.	1½ "
scarlet	½ "
other	3 "
Cloths, table	1
Combs, large horn	6
Cordoroy	7½ yards
Cotton	
striped	2½ yards
printed	5 "
Cotton wick	1 1/8 pounds

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<sup>1</sup>The "point" is a short black stripe which is woven into the blanket. Point blankets were introduced into the trade in 1780. (Rich, ed., Simpson's Journal, p. 168.)

<sup>2</sup>A capote is ". . . a long cloak or overcoat, properly one with a hood." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (2nd ed., 1959), p. 123.)

<sup>3</sup>One ell is 45 inches.



Crow stock, cooper's	1
Crust stand	1
Cups and saucers	12
Cutlasses	1
Cocks, brass	5
Dags <sup>4</sup>	
large 11 inch	24
large (unspecified)	2
small 8 inch	24
small 7 inch	12
small (unspeciefied)	1
eyed 8 inch	4
Dishes	
tin #8	2
tin oval	10
Duffle, <sup>5</sup> white	1½ yards
Flags	
fort	1
Union	1
Feathers, colored cock	1
Ferrets, asst.	17
Files	122
Flannel, common	3 yards
Fire wire (Company made)	3
Flints, gun	4053
Funnels, small tin	4
Gartering	
scarlet and striped	432
broad brace web	2 yards
Gimblets <sup>6</sup>	
assorted	12
spike	3
Glass, looking	1
Gridiron	1
Grindstone, small	1
Guns	
blunderbusses	3

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<sup>4</sup>A dag is a ". . . pointed piece of metal that resembles a dagger point and is used to lock timbers together." (Webster's Third New International Dictionary (3rd ed., 1966), p. 570.)

<sup>5</sup>Duffle is a ". . . coarse woolen cloth having a thick nap or frieze, named after the town of Duffle, Brabant." (Rich, ed., Simpson's Journal, p. 168.)

<sup>6</sup>A gimlet is a ". . . small tool with a screw point, grooved shank, and cross handle, for boring holes." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 350.)



swivel, brass	1	
canon, large	1	
canon, half size	1	
common trading rifles	6	cases and 7 guns
muskets	1	
muskets and bayonets	3	
musketoons	4	
pistols, common	10	
pistols, fine	4	
second hand guns	6	
Gun parts		
cocks	6	
guards	1	
hammers	4	
springs	11	
triggers	6	
worms, locket	12	
worm wires	720	
Gun powder	20	kegs and 47 3/4 pounds
Hammers	6	
Handkerchiefs	9	
Hats		
men's common	41	
fine	3	
children's	1	
cover silk	1	
Hinges, gate	55	pounds
Hooks, trout	12	
Horns, powder	110	
Hose, men's	2	pair
Inchaves, cooper's	2	
Iron		
rod for nails	84	pounds
bars	11 1/2	"
old	85	"
Iron, caulking	1	
Jackets	2	
Jointer, cooper's	1	
Kettles		
copper tea	2	
open copper	7	pounds and 3 kegs
copper camp	1 3/4	"
iron	1	
Knives		
yew (scalping)	134	
cooper's drawing	2	
cooper's hollowing	1	
roach	64	
table and forks	24	



## Ladles

iron	1
pewter soup	1
Lead, sheet	34 pounds
Locks, paddle bolt 3 inches	5

## Measures, copper

1/2 gallon	1
1/4 gallon	1
1/8 gallon	1
1/16 gallon	

## Medicines

gumm champhor	2 ounces
lavender	1/6 pound
lint, white	1/4 "
mint, essence of	2 ounces
ointment, Basilican	5/8 pound
peppermint	3 pounds
plaster, adhesive	3/4 yard
plaster, blistering	5/16 pound
powder	
Inloss	2 ounces
Picacuanna	1/4 pound
precipitate red	1/12 ounce
rhubarb	1 ounce
salts, Glauber	2 pounds
Turlington balsam	4
Turner's citrate	5/8 pound
vitrioli blue	1/2 "
Molten red	3 pieces
Moulds, brass for shot	1
Mugs, earthen 3/4 pint	2

## Nails

4731

## Needles

755

## Pans

frying	7
tin	2
Pick, grooving	1
Planes, iron	2
Plates	27
Pots, japanned	9

## Provisions

flour	14 bags
rice	64 1/2 pounds
rum	
distilled spirits	284 1/4 gallons
single distilled	30 kegs
sugar	
crushed	14 kegs
loaf	3 kegs and 8 1/2 pounds
tea	50 pounds
wines	
Tencriffé	2 kegs



	Port	1	keg
	high	2 27/32	gallons
Ribbon <sup>7</sup>		1/18	yard
Riffle <sup>7</sup>		1	
Rings		20 1/4	gross
Rosen		1/4	pound
Rumlets		18	
Sails for canoes		4	
Saws			
	cross cut	2	
	hand	2	
	pit	2	
Screw plates and taps		1	
Shears, blacksmith's		1	pair
Shirts			
	boy's calico	2	
	checked linen	600	
	common striped	27	
	fine striped	24	
	other	1	
Shirting, white		6	yards
Shoes			
	men's	39	pair
	Indian	80	"
Shot			
	B.B.	6	bags and 35 pounds
	Ball	39	bags and 54 5/6 pounds
Soap, yellow		1/4	pound
Spade		1	
Spoons, iron tinned		18	
Stationary			
	books, marble covered	8	
	powder, ink, black	4	packages
	powder, ink, red	1	"
	paper, foolscap	6	quires
	paper, post thin quarto	1	"
	paper, post C. H. fine	2	"
	pencils, black lead	4	
	pencils, slate	6	
	indian rubber	1	piece
	slates <sup>8</sup>	4	
	wafers <sup>8</sup>	1	box

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<sup>7</sup>"Riffle" could be interpreted several ways. It could be a gun, a "riffler" or small file with curved ends for working in depressions, or a gold sluice. There is no mention of minerals in the journal, so likely it referred to a gun, as rifled guns had become fairly common by this time, having been used by the Americans in the Revolution. (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 1954.)

<sup>8</sup>Wafers were adhesive disks made of dried paste, isinglass, or a similar material with an added coloring matter, used to seal letters or for attaching papers together. (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 2568.)



wax, sealing	6 sticks
Steel	
blister <sup>9</sup>	67 pounds
German	51 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Steels, fine common	864
Steel yards, large	1
Stirrups, leather,	1 pair
Stone rag	1
Strouds <sup>10</sup>	
white	3 $\frac{7}{12}$ yard
blue common	8 pieces and 5 $\frac{7}{12}$ yard
blue corded	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ yards
red common	12 pieces and 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ yards
green, corded	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ yards
Swansdown <sup>11</sup>	2 "
Tap bores	1
Tents, Russia sheeting	
20 ells	2
15 ells	1
10 ells	1
Thread	
colored # 10	6 $\frac{1}{16}$ pound
net 3 cord	2 "
assorted	1/32 "
Tin, sheet	3
Tobacco	
carrot <sup>12</sup>	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and 2 carrots
twist	50 rolls and 52 $\frac{1}{6}$ pound
N. W. twist	24 pounds
Tongs, blacksmith's	1 pair
Traps	
beaver	
complete	12
needing repairs	14
Trousers	4 pair

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<sup>9</sup>"Before the invention of the Bessemer process of steel-making, steel was either 'natural' steel, obtained from the ore by simple fusion, often known as German steel, or it was obtained by conversion from wrought iron. In the latter case the iron was furnaced with carbon, which it absorbed, and from its appearance when it left the furnace it was known as 'Blister-steel.'" (Rich, ed., Simpson's Journal, p. 169.)

<sup>10</sup>Strouding was ". . . a ccarse heavy woollen cloth . . . used in trade with No. American Indians . . . a blanket or garment of stroud." (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 2266.)

<sup>11</sup>Swansdown was a soft thick cloth made of a blend of wool and cotton or silk. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 856.)

<sup>12</sup>Carrot tobacco was rolled into large rolls.



Twine		
#1	1 3/10	skein
#3	3/10	"
Vermillion	20 1/4	pounds
Vices	3	
Waistcoat quilting	5	
Wire		
brass	15	pounds (approx.)
snaring	1 1/2	"
iron	1 1/4	"

Country Produce

Bark, canoe	5	
Barley	4	bushels
Boats		
new	1	
used	2	
Buffalo tongues	10	
Canoes, large	4	
Corn, Indian	35 3/16	bushels
Dried meat	275	pounds
Fat (grease)	115 3/4	"
Gum	16	"
Horses	10	
Lines, pack	20	pounds
Pemmican	7655	"
Pitch	187	"
Rice	3/28	bushel
Salt	17	"
country made	5 3/28	"
Skins		
buffalo, half dressed	19	
buffalo, large dressed	21	
deer	3	
lodge	2	
moose, large dressed	72 1/2	
moose, small dressed	7	
Sugar, maple	40 1/4	pounds
Tent leather	1 1/2	
Wattap	6	bundles



# APPENDIX C

## Furs Taken By the Bow River Expedition

This list is taken from one entitled "Accounts of Furs & Procured during the Year," filed as H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Chesterfield House (Bow River) - Account Book 1822 - 1823," fo. 29.

Fur	Number	Price	Total
Badgers	20	19d.	9/
Badgers, robe	1		
Bears, large grizzly	42	8/8 $\frac{1}{4}$	18/5/9
Bears, small grizzly or cub	12	8/8 $\frac{1}{4}$	5/4/3
Beaver, large common	1055	14/5 $\frac{1}{4}$	758/5/7
Beaver, cub	237	12/2	144/3/6
Cats, prime	103	3/7 $\frac{1}{2}$	18/13/4
Cats, common	12		
Foxes, red prime	131	3/8 $\frac{3}{4}$	24/8/6
Foxes, common	36		
Foxes, cross prime	2	14/8	1/9/4
Foxes, cross "D. G. S.d"	2		
Foxes, Kitt	84	10d.	1/16/8
Musquash (muskrat)	482	1/1	26/2/2
Otters, common	4	4/6 $\frac{3}{4}$	18/3
Otters, "Dusd."	4		
Swans	6	4/1	1/4/
Wolverines	1	5/2 $\frac{1}{2}$	5/2

Total value of furs £1001/5/6



# APPENDIX D

## Country Produce Credited to the Account of the Bow River Expedition

This list of goods was summarized from the **account** book of the Expedition, and shows all other commodities aside from furs taken in the winter 1822 - 1823. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fos. 17 - 19.)

Item	Quantity	Value	Total
Supplied to the Saskatchewan District			
Buffalo skins, large	3	6/	18/
Horses	2	40/	4/
[correction in pencil	-----	-----	20/0/]
Moose skins, large	4	7/6	1/10
Pemican	40 lb.	/9	1/10
Packing lines	20 lb.	/3	5/
Salt	1/64 bus.	10/	/2
			£ 8/3/2

### Supplied to Cumberland House

Buffalo skins, full	1	6/	6/
Buffalo skins, half	1	3/	3/
Pemican	1190 lb.	/9	44/12/6
Tongues, salted	137 lb.	/9	5/2/9
			£ 51/4/3

### Supplied to Norway House

Dried meat	739 lb.	/6	18/9/6
[correction in pencil - 2439 lb.]			
Fat	20 lb.	/9	15/
Pemican	20823 lb.	/9	783/17/3
[correction in pencil - 21660 lb.]			
Tongues	324	/9	12/3/
Barley	3/4 bus.	10/	7/6
Buffalo robes, prime	875	12/6	546/17/6
[correction in pencil - 783]			
Buffalo robes common	88	10/	44/0/
Buffalo hides, whole	825	10/	412/10/



Buffalo hides, half	75	5/	18/5/
[correction in pencil = 150]			
Buffalo calf hides	1484	10/	<u>742/0/</u>
			£ 2560/4/9

## Supplied to York Factory

Dried meat	1360 lb.	/6	34/0/
Fat	6475 lb.	/9	242/16/3
Pemican	9770 lb.	/9	256/9/
Tongues	1754	/9	65/18/7
Packing lines	90 lb.		1/26/
			£ <u>600/6/4</u>



## APPENDIX E

### The Balance Sheet of the Bow River Expedition

This balance sheet is taken directly from the account book, as it was felt that the contemporary view of the profit or loss of the Expedition was more important than any modern interpretation could be. (H. B. A., B.34/d/1, "Bow River Accounts," fo. 30.)

To Sundries Rec'd from York Store	2332/11/11
" " " " Norway Ho.	253/0/2
" " " " Cumberland Ho.	256/19/6
" " " " Saskatchewan	524/10/11
" " " " Isle a la Crosse	5/15/6
Amt. of Servants wages	1777/1/6
" " credit to Servt. for Horses etc. and cancelled debt.	215/7/
Short Credit on H. Monros wages	20/0/
Total	£ 6385/6/6

By Sundries Supplied to Saskatchewan	538/17/11
" " " " Cumberland Ho.	51/9/3
" " " " Norway Ho.	2639/18/9
" " " " York Factory	600/6/4
Remains left in Depot at Cumberland	776/7/6
Sundries sold to servants	938/10/1
Furs procured in the Department	1001/5/6
Sundries sold to servants omitted	9/14/3
Total	£ 6556/9/7

In pencil:

The [sic] will be no profit as the inventories are actually of no more value than the YF prices of the food. The men . . .



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